New research by YouGov SixthSense has found that location is the “most pressing” issue affecting consumers when choosing a gym.

More than two-thirds of participants to the YouGov SixthSense Healthclubs survey said that the proximity of a health club to home was the main factor that influenced their choice. Nearly one-fifth of UK gym goers said that a location close to the workplace was important, while 64 per cent said that “reasonable price” was also a significant factor.

Tourism and heritage minister John Penrose has announced plans to transfer responsibility for London’s eight Royal Parks to mayor Boris Johnson.

The parks – including Regent’s Park, Kensington Gardens and St James’ Park – are currently managed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

However, Penrose said that the proposals would ensure “full democratic accountability” to Londoners and would help establish links with other London-wide issues.

US-based exhibition design company Thinkwell has been appointed to design the Harry Potter visitor attraction at Leavesden Studios, UK.

Although exact details of the attraction are to be revealed, Thinkwell said the site will give the general public the ability to tour several of the original Harry Potter film sets.

The studios, near Watford, Hertfordshire, were acquired by Warner Bros in November last year (2010).

Shortly after, the US-based film giant said that it would spend more than £100m (US$160m, €116m) in developing the 170-acre site, which it has used to produce all eight Harry Potter films as well other hits films such as The Dark Knight and Inception. The group has secured permission for its development plans from the Three Rivers District Council. It is expected that Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden and its attractions will open in mid 2012.

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Penrose calls for ‘directly accountable’ Royal Parks

PETE HAYMAN

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ENVIRONMENT

Kengo Kuma won a design contest for the project whole of Scotland, acting as a magnet for visitors from all over the world.

“The V&A at Dundee presents quite an opportunity to grow Dundee’s reputation as a centre for the creative industries sector.”

The Scottish Government has revealed that it will invest nearly £5m in the V&A at Dundee development over the next two years.

Japan-based architect Kengo Kuma is behind the design of the new attraction, which is to be developed at Craig Harbour as part of a wider regeneration of the city’s waterfront.

The funding will now allow the project partners – Dundee City Council; the Universities of Dundee and Abertay Dundee; and the V&A – to start fundraising towards the full cost.

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CPFC unveils new stadium plans

Pete Hayman

Crystal Palace Football Club (CPFC) has unveiled plans to transform the National Sports Centre (NSC) as part of a major new stadium development to be located at Crystal Palace Park, London.

The npower Championship club – in partnership with CB Richard Ellis and AFL Architects – is looking to move back to its original home with a new 40,000-seat venue.

A new indoor aquatic centre; a reconfigured indoor complex for the NSC; and a community athletics facility are also proposed as part of the development.

CPFC said that the aquatic facility would remove a need for the swimming pool to remain as part of the listed NSC structure and help reduce its running costs. The scheme would also enable the current space to be redeployed to cater for a wider range of community and elite athletic sports.

CPFC co-chair Steve Parish said: “We believe a stadium at Crystal Palace park can help create a bright new future for the club as well as helping it to breathe new life into both the sports centre and the park.”

Council plans Cheshunt leisure investment

Pete Hayman

Grundy Park Leisure Centre in Cheshunt is to benefit from up to £2.5m of investment under Broxbourne Borough Council plans.

The local authority said that it was proposing “large-scale investment” at leisure facilities such as Grundy Park, rather than look to reopen Hoddesdon’s open air pool.

Hoddesdon Open Air Pool shut in 2008 and councillors have decided that the expenditure required needed to bring the facility up to a “reasonable” standard was not justified.

Godalming leisure centre plans submitted

Pete Hayman

Waverley Borough Council (WBC) has received a planning application for a new leisure centre in Godalming.

The proposed facility would be located next to Godalming Lawn Tennis Club and feature a 25m swimming pool as well as a learner pool.

A 60-station fitness suite, a dance studio and a café are also included in the design.

ISG has been appointed to deliver the £6m facility, which has been designed by Pozzoni and aims to rival privately operated health clubs.

WBC is likely to decide the fate of the plans in March, with members of the public able to comment until 11 February. The construction phase is expected to take 18 months.

WBC’s Roger Steel said: “Building a new leisure centre in Godalming is a top priority for Waverley and receiving the planning application is another major milestone reached.”
**Water Polo Arena firms revealed**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Work on the 5,000-seat Water Polo Arena at London's Olympic Park has now started after the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) named the contractors for the scheme.

Silvertown-based ES Group will construct the main structure of the venue, while A&T/Barr and Wray of Glasgow will install the temporary swimming pools. Jackson Civil Engineering Group; Byrne Group; Alto Seating Systems; and Balfour Beatty Engineering Services are also working on the scheme.

A design team – headed by David Morley Architects and including Buro Happold and Max Fordham – has drawn up plans for the wedge-shaped arena, which will feature an inflatable roof and include a 37m-long competition pool and a 33m-long warm-up pool.

The ODA has revealed which firms will build the 2012 water polo arena. The venue will be used to host the men's and women's Olympic water polo competitions. ODA project sponsor for the Water Polo Arena Ian Crockford said: “The venue will join the Aquatics Centre to form a dramatic and action-packed gateway to the Olympic Park when spectators arrive in 2012.”

**Work starts on UEA Soccerpark extension**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Construction work is now underway on a £400,000 expansion of the Soccerpark venue at the University of East Anglia’s (UEA) Sportspark.

Three new seven-a-side football pitches are to be constructed as part of the development, which is to be delivered by contractor Bernhards and scheduled to be completed by February.

The 48m x 24m pitches will be fitted with a 3G synthetic surface and will complement the four existing five-a-side 3G and six seven-a-side Astroturf pitches at Soccerpark.

Sportspark director Keith Nicholls said: “We already have more small-sided soccer pitches than anywhere else in East Anglia.

“We are excited to be able to offer even more pitches for students and the local community to use.”

**Maidstone United in stadium funding appeal**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Maidstone United Football Club (MUFC) has launched a campaign to raise funds towards a new £1.6m stadium at James Whatman Way.

The Ryman League Premier Division club is planning to fund the development using capital from its new owners (£250,000) and the Football Foundation (£150,000).

MUFC anticipates that it will source the remaining £1.2m from new investors buying shares in the club, with the closing date for the campaign at the end of April.
Wiltshire Council in pledge to reopen fire-hit complex

PTETE HAYMAN

Wiltshire Council has said that it is working with operator DC Leisure to reopen the fire-damaged Lime Kiln Leisure Centre in Wootton Bassett “as soon as possible”. The council revealed that damage caused by December's blaze was centred on the health suite, the swimming changing rooms and the main corridor.

Lime Kiln's swimming pool plant room has also suffered structural and roof damage, while the swimming pool hall itself has experienced “heavy” smoke pollution.

Abbeycroft to open budget gym

TOM WALKER

Suffolk-based Abbeycroft Leisure has become the latest UK-based leisure trust to announce that it will launch a budget gym concept.

The non-profit group is to open The Gym Ipswich on 24 January in the former St Matthews Baths in Civic Drive after a major refurbishment of the building.

The club will boast a 100-station gym equipped by Matrix and offer memberships starting at £12.99 per month with no joining fee.

Abbeycroft chief executive Warren Smyth said: “The more affordable fitness is, the more people will start taking exercise and that can only be a good thing for the UK, where 62 per cent are already obese or overweight.”

Abbeycroft currently manages both Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centres in Suffolk as part of a partnership with St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

In November 2010 Kirklees Active Leisure, which operates community leisure services in West Yorkshire, announced it was to launch two budget gyms in the Huddersfield and Dewsbury areas.

SLM announces 2011 investment plans

TOM WALKER

A number of leisure facilities run by Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) on behalf of local authorities are to benefit from improvements as part of its redevelopment programme for 2011.

The operator, which is also set to open the £38m Basildon Sporting Village in April, will invest more than £2m in existing centres during 2011.

A £500,000 upgrade is planned for Stratford Leisure and Visitor Centre, which is to see the installation of new resistance equipment; dance mats and a sports wall supplied by Zig Zag; indoor bikes from Keisure and Trixter; and a Power Plate suite.

Elsewhere, two Poole facilities – Dolphin leisure centre and Ashdown leisure centre Swimming On Referral – an initiative allowing people with health issues to gain free swimming sessions – has launched in Suffolk.

The scheme, operated by Anglia Community Leisure, will be offered at at Newmarket and Mildenhall leisure centres and will see people who would benefit from being more active being prescribed free sessions on referral.

Sessions include a one-to-one assessment, after which participants will receive a specifically prescribed aquatic programme.
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**Three new locations for The Gym**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Property agent Cushman and Wakefield (CW) has acquired three new locations for low-cost chain The Gym.

In December, the health club operator confirmed its plans to add up to 20 new sites to its portfolio during 2011 after securing a multi-million pound funding package.

The three latest locations that have been secured by CW on behalf of The Gym include a 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) site in Leeds and a 16,500sq ft (1,533sq m) Bristol property.

A 17,500sq ft (1,626sq m) location in Kingston-upon-Thames will also be incorporated into The Gym’s expanding UK portfolio of low-cost health clubs.

CW senior surveyor Thomas Rose said: “These three illustrate the demand for affordable gym membership across the UK. The prime locations we have secured highlight the quality of The Gym’s offer and appeal to major landlords such as Hammerson and LaSalle.

“The Gym is the leading operator in the sector and it is continuing its aggressive expansion having secured £30m of funding to acquire at least 20 new sites in 2011.”

**Tone to roll out ladies-only concept**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Leisure trust Tone is to roll out its Feel Good Factory concept at its managed centres following a successful 10-month pilot period. Currently based at Tone’s Blackbrook Pavilion centre in Taunton, Somerset, Feel Good Factory is a ladies-only power assisted fitness and inch loss centre.

It has its own entrance and reception, which separates it from the main facility, and is targeted at females who are overweight and/or have limited mobility.

**New £450,000 gym for Brighton facility**

**PETE HAYMAN**

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) is to unveil a new £450,000 fitness facility at the King Alfred Leisure Centre in Hove, East Sussex.

Due to open on 24 January, the gym features more than 40 stations of cv and resistance machines, which have been supplied by Life Fitness.

A former café has been transformed as part of the scheme, while a spinning studio is located next to the gym area and contains 12 Star Trac spinning cycles.

Meanwhile, both male and female changing areas have been revamped, along with the toilets and showers. New air conditioning and audio-visual systems have also been installed.

Good Factory is a ladies-only power assisted fitness and inch loss centre. It has its own entrance and reception, which separates it from the main facility, and is targeted at females who are overweight and/or have limited mobility.
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Maryport museum to reopen ‘by Easter’

PETE HAYMAN

Allerdale Borough Council (ABC) has revealed that Maryport Maritime Museum will reopen by Easter after handing over the attraction to a local community group.

The Maritime Heritage Group has been awarded a licence from the local authority that will enable it to maintain the museum and its collection of maritime exhibits.

ABC staff will provide assistance with the day-to-day running of the museum, while public funding is also being made available through a grant to the enthusiasts.

HLF gives Thinktank £900,000

PETE HAYMAN

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum has secured £900,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards its new Made In Birmingham exhibition gallery.

The grant will help the attraction exhibit around 1,200 objects in five new themed displays - Orientation; Nuts and Bolts; Tins and Things; Treasure; and Gadgets. It is to open in December 2012.

Developed in consultation with museum visitors, Made In Birmingham will help to provide a new education facility for everyone from pre-school to adult learners.

Anne Jenkins, head of the HLF for the West Midlands, said: “When complete it will expose the fascinating tale of Birmingham’s manufacturing heritage as the ‘workshop of the world’, and show how innovations in materials and manufacturing from the past are paralleled in industrial developments today.”

Birmingham City Council’s Len Clark, chair of the Thinktank Trust, added: “Birmingham has a rich and diverse heritage of manufacturing, and it’s fantastic that we are able to better showcase this to our visitors.”

2011 Kids In Museums Manifesto launched

PETE HAYMAN

Museums need to be noisy to encourage new ideas and debate, according to the 2011 Kids In Museums Manifesto.

Independent charity Kids In Museums is behind the document, which was launched at London Transport Museum, contains 20 measures that attractions should adopt in order to ensure they are family friendly, including making the most of their ‘wow factor’.

The manifesto sees museums being encouraged to welcome each visitor, to offer flexible family tickets; and to be “height and language aware”. Attractions should also be at the heart of developing ‘conversations’ between different generations of family members, as well as offering more interactive features.

Kids In Museums director Dea Birkett said: “Visitors have let us know what they want from a museum visit. And they’ve said they don’t want to go with one, but with many generations of their family.”

Llyn Peninsula awarded HLF landscape funding

PETE HAYMAN

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced that the Llyn Peninsula has been awarded more than £706,000 through its Landscape Partnership (LPS) scheme.

Gwynedd Council is leading the LPS, which comprises a number of other local groups and includes a range of schemes to promote the area’s economy and culture.

Work includes the conservation and restoration of 330 hectares (815 acres) of wildlife habitats and improvements to interpretation for visitors to the peninsula.

Funding boost for National Botanic Garden of Wales

PETE HAYMAN

A new interactive green technology trail is to be developed at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire.

The Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding, with a £28,300 grant – awarded through the National Science Academy – to help finance the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Sustainable Futures Technology Trail.

A further £42,000 award will enable the attraction to host an exhibition looking at the role of fungi in the health of people.

Knowsley zoo responds to animal disposal claims

PETE HAYMAN

Knowsley Safari Park has said that it has ‘swiftly addressed’ issues following allegations in relation to its treatment of deceased animals.

Photos taken by a former employee, which were published in The Sun on 10 January, appeared to show animal carcasses that had not been properly disposed of.

Concerns were also raised regarding firearms procedures at Knowsley Safari Park; issues that the Lord Derby-owned attraction insisted “had been addressed”.

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Newcastle theatre firm selected

Pete Hayman

Newcastle-based Surgo Construction has been appointed to deliver a £4.75m restoration of the city’s Theatre Royal ahead of its 175th anniversary in 2012.

Work will be undertaken between March and September in order to restore the auditorium to Frank Matcham’s original 1901 design.

The scheme will also include selective demolition of post-Matcham interior features; repairs to the roof; and the restoration of screens, partitions and barriers.

Surgo Construction will also manage the Theatre Royal’s interior finishings, as well as the installation of new seating and the refurbishment of toilet facilities.

Theatre Royal chief executive Philip Bernays said: “The success of this project is of critical importance not only to us, but also to the theatre-going public in the region and beyond.”

Surgo will work with architects Sansome Hall; theatre consultants Charcoalblue and conservation expert Dr David Wilmore of Theatresearch. The Theatre Royal will reopen its new auditorium on 12 September.

New 3D cinema facilities for St Albans venue

Pete Hayman

Digital and 3D cinema facilities will be installed at The Maltings Arts Theatre in St Albans as part of a major overhaul of the venue.

St Albans City and District Council (SACDC) subsidises the venue at a rate of £100,000-£150,000 each year and hopes the revamp will safeguard the theatre’s future.

The addition of digital cinema facilities could help The Maltings Arts Theatre to become a self-financing venue, with 3D cinema projection also set to enhance its offer.

Fourth Plinth commissions announced

Pete Hayman

London mayor Boris Johnson has revealed that works by Elmgreen and Dragset and Katharina Fritsch have been chosen to occupy Trafalgar Square’s Fourth Plinth.

Elmgreen and Dragset’s Powerless Structures, Fig. 101 will take up residence in 2012, replacing Yinka Shonibare’s Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle. Katharina Fritsch’s Hahn/Cock is to be unveiled in 2013. Both were among a shortlist of six works for the Fourth Plinth.

Johnson said: “All of the shortlisted artists show what an extraordinary crucible the Fourth Plinth is for contemporary art. It continues to spark the imagination and there has been a tremendous response from the public.”

Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group chair Ekow Eshun added: “Both have created imaginative and arresting artworks that fully respond to the uniqueness of their location.”

Government funding for Luton youth centre plans

Pete Hayman

Plans for a new £4.7m youth centre in Luton, Bedfordshire, are to move forward after the government confirmed capital funding towards the scheme.

TOKKO – designed by Max Rengifo of AStudio Architecture – will feature a climbing wall; performance spaces; a games and IT area; and multi-use studios.

Training and counselling rooms; a rooftop zen garden and a beauty and fashion studio are also proposed, along with a café that will be open to the public.

US to play host to major Irish arts programme

Pete Hayman

More than 40 US states are to host a major arts programme – Imagine Ireland – being organised by Culture Ireland.

The Irish government is investing EUR4m (£3.4m, US$5.4m) in the project, which will see more than 1,000 artists and producers create in excess of 400 events.

Irish culture minister Mary Hanafin said: “We have invested in Imagine Ireland because the arts and culture are so vital to Ireland’s recovery and it will bring Irish culture to new audiences and generations.”

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Inbound tourism entering a period of great opportunities

PHILIPPE ROSSITER
is chief executive of Institute of Hospitality

According to the CBI’s recent London Business survey, 84 per cent of companies in the capital regard it as a good place to do business. Yet it is not all rosy, for within the survey findings, there is also evidence of some of the perennial ‘gripes’ from London-based enterprises; high operating costs, the tax environment and the transport infrastructure. In addition, the survey was conducted after the government’s June 2010 budget, and before the spending review announcement. There is, therefore, an element of uncertainty within the survey findings, with 45 per cent of respondents undecided about the economic recovery.

In keeping with the outcome of this ‘satisfaction survey’, it is interesting to note how well the London hospitality industry has fared over the past twelve months. Hoteliers in London have had some exceptional results, with more than 12 per cent revPAR growth, and the highest occupancy in Europe at some 83 per cent.

Whether this trend will continue for 2011 is not clear, although the industry remains optimistic. The Royal Wedding, the Champions League final and the accelerating build up to the Olympics will all create the conditions for increased visitor arrivals, both business and leisure. Nevertheless, these positives have to be set against a more challenging domestic economic environment, with the impact of the government’s austerity measures beginning to hit home.

Add to this the relative appreciation of sterling against both the euro and the dollar, coupled with the VAT increase, and there is every chance that the UK, and London in particular, will become more expensive for overseas travellers.

There is, however, room for optimism, with a report from VisitBritain revealing that 83 per cent of holidaymakers in London rated dining out as their top experience, with 49 per cent enjoying the attractions of its pubs. All told, the capital attracted more than 14 million visitors, spending in excess of £8bn. At a time of general economic gloom this is a positive message from which we can all glean some good cheer.

HOTELS

Travelodge eyes up expansion

PETE HAYMAN

Travelodge has announced plans to build 35 new hotels this year – in the UK and in Spain – as part of a £300m investment in its estate.

The move will increase the budget hotel operator’s portfolio to 495 hotels and comes as the group increased its growth targets to have 1,100 properties by 2025.

More than half of the new-build Travelodge hotels to open this year are being built in major UK cities, including Birmingham; Cardiff; Liverpool; and Manchester.

Five of the properties will be developed in coastal locations such as Morecambe and Paignton, while a new Travelodge is also planned for Valencia Airport, Spain.

Travelodge’s chief executive, Guy Parsons, said: “We have successfully acquired superior sites due to lower market property prices, which otherwise would not have been available for hotel use.

“We have demonstrated our commitment to expand and have a clear growth plan laid out which means we will reach more than 1,100 hotels and 100,000 rooms by 2025.”

‘Key events’ to benefit London hotel operators

PETE HAYMAN

April’s Royal Wedding and the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games present a ‘fantastic opportunity’ for London hoteliers.

According to HVS London, hotels are now able to charge full room rates and demand minimum stays, with properties already fully booked for the wedding of Prince William.

HVS London is predicting that the capital’s hoteliers could benefit from “boom years” as a result of the events, as well as other major UK cities such as Edinburgh and Manchester.

Westfield Stratford City deal confirmed

PETE HAYMAN

Cycas Hotel Partners and Patron Capital have secured the long-term leasehold rights for two hotels which are being built at London’s Westfield Stratford City development.

Due to open ahead of the 2012 Games, the deal encompasses 350 rooms and suites and include a Holiday Inn and a Staybridge Suites property.

Cycas Hospitality will run the hotels in a franchise agreement with Intercontinental Hotels Group. Westfield will lead the construction phase.

John Wagner, director at Cycas Hotel Partners, said: “The new Holiday Inn and Staybridge Suites at Westfield Stratford City will be situated in one of London’s most important new developments.”

Patron Capital director of hospitality Josh Wyatt added: “The project represents a prime opportunity to own and operate a large scale hotel scheme in London.”

London’s Westfield Stratford City is to boast a 188-bedroom Holiday Inn

Sahara India Pariwar plans to joint run the property with JW Marriott

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Inbound tourism entering a period of great opportunities

KURT JANSON is policy director of Tourism Alliance

Although both inbound and domestic tourism numbers for 2010 showed a slight fall, there is a place where tourism is continuing to rise – the government agenda.

When the coalition programme was launched in May 2010, many commentators were surprised to see a specific undertaking to “take steps to improve the competitiveness of the UK tourism industry, recognising the important part it plays in our national economy”. This new-found interest was reinforced by the Prime Minister’s speech on the importance of tourism to the UK economy in August and the subsequent undertaking to produce a National Tourism Strategy.

The latest step up the government agenda for the tourism industry came in the Prime Minister’s speech on 6 January, where he unveiled plans to target support into industries that the government considers best able to provide the growth and job opportunities required to rebuild the economy. To use the PM’s own words, “Getting behind tourism, green energy, pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, the industries of the future – all this is crucial.”

To have tourism identified as being one of the five industries of the future is a step-change from the previous position of having to convince government that tourism was a legitimate sector to be recognised in the development of policy. However, there is a long way to go before we consider it “job done”. What the sector needs to do now is offer the government measures that it can take – within budget restraints – to provide economic growth and employment.

The Tourism Alliance is developing a menu of opportunities to help stimulate visitor numbers. A large part of this will be reducing the level of regulatory burden affecting businesses and the tourism minister has recently agreed to ‘develop a problem’ in consultation with the industry to achieve this. There are also efficiencies that can be achieved within existing procedures, such as visa processing, which will boost growth.

This will help focus government efforts to where they will provide the greatest return for both businesses and for UK plc.

TOURISM

Saatchi appointed by VisitBritain

TOM WALKER

Advertising agency M&C Saatchi has been appointed to work on VisitBritain’s new You’re Invited global marketing campaign.

The agency has been tasked with creating a campaign aimed at boosting tourism around the forthcoming Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the 2012 London Olympic Games.

The agency will work ‘pro bono’ for the five-month period between January and May 2011, when the campaign is due to be launched to consumers.

The theme will be extending a message of welcome and inviting the world to visit Britain in the run up to, during and beyond 2012. The company is lead by brothers Maurice and Saatchi’s campaign will promote events such as the Royal Wedding

Charles Saatchi, famous for iconic marketing such as the 1979 “Labour isn’t Working” campaign for the Conservative Party in 1979 - resulting in a landslide election victory for then opposition leader Margaret Thatcher.

Welsh tourism figures beat expectations

PETE HAYMAN

Welsh tourism performed better than expected between January and September last year, according to the latest UK Tourism Survey.

The study found that UK residents made nearly 7.3 million visits to Wales that involved an overnight stay, down one per cent on the previous year.

Meanwhile, the total number of nights spent in Wales by domestic residents increased by one per cent to nearly 28.9 million. Visitors to wales spent £1.237m, up three per cent.

Mayor: New London hub ‘vital for growth’

PETE HAYMAN

London mayor Boris Johnson has called on the government to create a new hub airport in south east England in order to help encourage future UK economic growth.

A new report overseen by Transport for London deputy chair Daniel Moylan has claimed that jobs would go to other European countries if UK capacity is not increased.

Johnson has now urged the government to review its aviation policy and has received the backing of a number of business leaders from the services and aviation sectors.

“The capital’s airports are full, our runways are rammed and we risk losing jobs should we fail to act,” said Johnson.

“We need to start planning for a brand new airport that can help meet the ever increasing demand for aviation and act as a hub, particularly to the rest of the UK.”

Boris Johnson has called for a new hub airport to help drive UK growth
Advertisement for the tender of Culture and Leisure Services

The Council is inviting expressions of interest from suitable competent operators for the management of all of the following culture and leisure facilities and services within the District of Cannock Chase.

- Rugeley Leisure Centre
- Chase Leisure Centre
- Cannock Park Golf Course
- The Museum of Cannock Chase
- The Prince of Wales Theatre
- Community Wellbeing Services, (Arts, Sports and Play)
- Business Development and Support Services, (as appropriate in support of the above services)

Looking to the future, the Council wishes to enter into a long term partnership with one or more partners for the management of its Cultural and Leisure services for up to 20 years. The partner(s) will have a strong track record in the management of these services and facilities and be able to bring innovation, improvement and increase levels of participation throughout the District. In addition to the services and facilities listed above the scope of this procurement includes all of the integral support services required to deliver and develop effective services.

Working in partnership the core outcomes will be to:

- Increase participation in sports and physical activity
- Increase participation and attendance in cultural activities
- Increase value for money by delivering minimum target savings of £540k per year, (in a full year)

Please note that the Culture and Leisure Services to which this procurement exercise relates fall within Part B of Schedule 3 to the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (“the regulations”) and Annex IIB to council directive 2004/18/EC. Whilst the Service requirement has been advertised via the OJEU neither the placement of this advertisement or contract notice nor any other indication shall be taken to mean that the Council intend to hold themselves bound by any of the regulations save those applicable to Part B Residual Services. Please note the Council will not be liable for any costs incurred by Applicants in the preparation of their pre-qualification submissions, tender documents or any other submissions related to this procurement exercise. The contract term will be for a minimum of Ten (10) years with the option to extend for Two, (2) periods of Five (5) years.

It is the Council’s intention to comply with the Code of Workforce Practice in order to protect the employment terms and conditions of existing employees transferred to successful operator(s).

Expressions of interest should be made via e-mail to the following address strategicprojects@cannockchasedc.gov.uk for the attention of Tony McGovern, Corporate Director and a Pre-Qualification Pack will be sent out to interested operators.

The deadline for the completion and submission of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire is Midday Friday March 4 2011.
Young’s opens new South London hotel

Pub operator and brewer Young’s has unveiled a new 23-bedroom hotel at its Alma pub in Wandsworth, South London, following a £2.7m investment.

A new accommodation wing featuring boutique-style bedrooms has been added to the pub, which will add to the group’s existing portfolio of nearly 350 rooms.

Hotel designers RDD were involved with the scheme, which also included a revamp of The Alma’s pub and dining room. The property also includes an events space.

Ashford development consultation launches

Ashford Borough Council (ABC) is inviting local residents to have their say on a new planning document outlining potential development sites in the Kent town. Covering a period up until 2016, the Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document has identified possible locations for sport and recreation schemes. ABC’s strategy also sets out potential sites for open spaces. The consultation is scheduled to end at 5pm on 4 February and also identifies potential urban extensions.

Stockport Council secures leisure complex acquisition

Stockport Council has announced that it has completed a deal to acquire the town’s Grand Central leisure complex. The purchase is designed to help push forward the regeneration of central Stockport and to attract up to a further £100m in private sector investment.

Stockport Council leader Dave Goddard said: “Our proactive approach to the redevelopment of the site includes working with private sector partners to build office space, a hotel and multi-storey car park.”

£30m floating leisure village for Glasgow

PETE HAYMAN

A £30m floating leisure village is set to transform the former Canting Basin in Glasgow.

Scottish Enterprise said that plans put forward by Manchester-based Floating Concepts – designed by ZM Architecture and water-based architects Baca – had been selected for the scheme.

Work is scheduled to start in the second quarter of 2012 and will take up to three years to complete, with the complex to be built in three phases.

Floating Concepts is to hold talks with Glasgow City Council with a view to submitting an outline planning application for the scheme, which will include a roof-top concert arena; a marina; restaurants; shops; offices and residential units.

Floating Concepts chief executive David Beard said: “All great coastal cities have a prime waterfront destination and now Glasgow has the chance to join those ranks.”

Mixed-use revamp for Armagh Gaol

PETE HAYMAN

A former gaol in Armagh, Northern Ireland, is to be transformed as part of a mixed-use development.

Armagh City and District Council has held an event to gather views on plans for a reconciliation and heritage centre as part of the scheme.

The attraction will form part of a wider heritage-led development for Armagh Gaol, with the council working alongside Trevor Osborne Property Group and The Prince’s Regeneration Trust.

Plans for the gaol also include a new hotel, spa, retail space and residential units and will help transform a previously closed off part of the gaol into an accessible city resource.

Trevor Osborne said that the heritage and reconciliation centre is at the very heart of the regeneration and the project team would be doing the community a disservice if it “didn’t get its buy in” for the project.

Ros Kerslake, the chief executive of The Prince’s Regeneration Trust, added: “We want the centre to be both a reflective acknowledgement of a difficult past and a real opportunity to promote reconciliation.”

Two potential schemes for former arms dump

PETE HAYMAN

Two developers have been shortlisted to lead a mixed-use scheme at a former Royal Navy arms dump at Broughton Moor, Cumbria. Allerdale Borough Council and Cumbria County Council acquired the 425-hectare (1,050-acre) site in 2008 and aim to dispose of it by 31 August.

Derwent Forest Developments and ESH Developments have now been given more time to refine their proposals, which could both include leisure facilities.
Manchester City Council (MCC) is inviting local residents to comment on plans for a major overhaul of Alexandra Park in Whalley Range.

A new email network to gather the views of park users – the ‘People’s Panel’ – has been launched by the council as part of the process.

MCC is currently working on a bid for Heritage Lottery Fund support worth £2m towards the restoration of the park’s Victorian features. Meanwhile, a funding application has been also submitted to Sport England, which aims to secure £1.25m towards new sports facilities.

MCC executive member for culture and leisure Mike Amesbury said: “While the current financial climate for public services is an exceptionally tough one, Manchester remains committed to improving its parks and green spaces wherever possible.”

FCW to fund Stackpole Estate project

Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) has confirmed that it will fund a five-year programme to restore the National Trust’s (NT) Stackpole Estate in Pembrokeshire.

Work has already started on clearing shrubs and weeds from parts of the 235-hectare (581-acre) woodland, while a 1960s conifer plantation will also be removed.

FCW has also secured consent to remove a group of trees that will help open up views across the estate from where the Stackpole Court mansion once stood.

NT’s Shane Logan said: “This will encompass the views the Campbells of Cawdor would have enjoyed in the mid 19th century. We’ll be planting trees in other parts of the estate to compensate for the felling. It’s vital that we continue the work of previous generations.”

One of the additional benefits from the coppicing and felling of trees is that wood will be used in the newly-installed woodchip boiler in the Stackpole Centre for Outdoor Learning.

The States of Jersey has awarded land remediation group VHE a £5.2m contract for the construction of the long-awaited Millennium Town Park in St Helier.

Work by VHE will see all toxic materials removed from the gasworks and secure an environmental future for the public park.

The scheme started on 10 January with completion due in autumn. Consultants involved are engineer Parsons Brinckerhoff, Davis Langdon and Burns and Nice.

New scheme to boost Lancashire moorland

United Utilities is working with Lancashire County Council as part of a scheme to enhance more than 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) of moorland near Burnley.

Worsthorne Moor is to benefit from a major restoration project, which has been designed to help prevent the erosion of peatland and improve visitor facilities.

Information signs will be installed and wheelchair access will be upgraded, while a formal mountain bike trail through Hurstwood Wood is also being proposed.

VHE appointed to deliver Millennium Park revamp

The States of Jersey has awarded land remediation group VHE a £5.2m contract for the construction of the long-awaited Millennium Town Park in St Helier.

Work by VHE will see all toxic materials removed from the gasworks and secure an environmental future for the public park.

The scheme started on 10 January with completion due in autumn. Consultants involved are engineer Parsons Brinckerhoff, Davis Langdon and Burns and Nice.

£11.4m funding for South Downs National Park

The government has allocated £11.4m to help fund work to be undertaken by the new South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in the coming financial year.

SDNPA, which is to become fully operational on 1 April, is planning to provide Community Grants totalling £400,000 over the next year to local groups.

Over the next four years, the authority’s budget will be reduced to £10.2m but chair Margaret Paren said it would ensure the maximum benefit from any expenditure.
InterContinental Hotels in UK jobs pledge

PETE HAYMAN

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) is one of a number of private sector companies to pledge to create new UK jobs in 2011 and beyond.

The hotel operator confirmed that it will make 1,000 jobs available this year and a further 3,000 opportunities in the next ‘three-to-four years’.

IHG was one of a number of major private sector employers to meet with Prime Minister David Cameron at Downing Street over how the private sector can be helped to create new UK jobs.

Richard Solomons, the group’s chief financial officer, said: “Hotels offer a quick and flexible way to get people back into work. These are jobs with real prospects for progression.”

“Unemployment levels are the highest in the kinds of jobs needed in the hotel industry – from bar staff, through catering assistants, to hotel porters.”

The operator has pledged to create 1,000 new opportunities this year

UWIC sports medicine facility opens

TOM WALKER

A new sports and exercise medicine centre – one of the first facilities of its kind in the UK – has officially opened at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC).

Designed to benefit both elite athletes and the general public, the new facility forms part of the National Indoor Athletics Centre and will support sport and exercise medicine research.

Facilities and services offered by UWIC’s new centre include ultrasound, sports and clinical biomechanics, echocardiography, rehabilitation and physiotherapy.

Postgraduate medical education and a range of clinical services will also be supported by the new UWIC facility.

Wales national football team manager Gary Speed said: “It is a forward thinking attitude and innovative system here at the new Sport and Exercise Medicine Centre.”

Dr John Fairclough, professor of sports medicine, added: “Our links with universities in Wales and the South West of England will allow us to develop a pre-eminent research centre for sport and exercise medicine.”

UWIC’s new centre features sports and clinical biomechanics facilities

People 1st calls for improvements in customer service

TOM WALKER

People 1st has warned that leisure businesses could lose out on Olympic revenue if they fail to improve levels of customer service.

The sector skills council for the hospitality, leisure, tourism and travel industries is urging firms to invest in training now to make the most of the £2bn that could be generated from visitors to the 2012 Games.

The UK is currently ranked a lowly 14th in the international customer service rankings by the annual Nation Brand Index Survey.

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To be the ideal candidate for either role, you will have a proven track record in developing and delivering community development projects and programmes relating to arts development, sports development, youth development and play services; accessing grant and sponsorship funding and be able to display initiative, drive and have a passion for engaging with customers and stakeholders. You will have exceptional organisational and communication skills and be strong at finding innovative solutions to problems. Your positive attitude in this challenging role will support the work of the Community Development Manager. You will work across an exciting and varied range of community development activities and programmes including initiatives linked to London 2012.

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Head of Visitor Services
Highland Perthshire, Scotland

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We seek applicants who can demonstrate a management record with strong team leadership, uncompromising customer service and sharp commercial acumen within the tourism industry. Experience of management within a multi-site operation would be an advantage and an appreciation for heritage conservation and interpretation is essential.

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Company: YMCA Fitness Industry Training
Location: Nationwide, United Kingdom
Closing date: 31 Oct 2011

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FULL-TIME, FEMALE FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Due to the nature of this role we are looking for a dynamic Female Fitness Instructor to join our team in Mobberley, Cheshire. You will be qualified to a minimum of REPS Level 2 and a Group Exercise qualification would also be desirable.

Duties to include Fitness Testing, Gym Inductions and Programme Design as well as overseeing the day-to-day operation of the Gym, Pool and studio.

Experience preferred for both positions, but not essential, as full training will be given. Hours of work for both positions are: 40 hrs per week (shifts 5 days over 7).

CV and letter of application to: mark@cheshirehealthclub.co.uk

FULL-TIME RECEPTIONIST

We are looking for a dynamic Receptionist to join our team in Mobberley, Cheshire. Duties to include computer work, cash handling and serving light refreshments to our members. High standards of personal presentation are essential for this customer-facing role.

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4Leisure – UK wide

We are recruiting for some of the most exclusive and best equipped health clubs in the industry and we’re looking to recruit the best talent on the market for these exciting opportunities.

With the ability to inspire and motivate your teams, your focus will be on delivering an engaging industry-leading exercise experience for the members, maximising personal training revenue, driving club usage and providing an exciting offering of studio classes and events whilst maintaining a vibrant atmosphere for your members.

What do we look for?:
- REPS Level 3 or equivalent
- A history of driving personal training revenue through teams of trainers
- Experience of working with KPIs, budgets and revenue targets
- Evidence of implementing and managing a member retention strategy
- Polished managers with strong communication and people-management skills
- A passion for exceeding customer expectations

What can our clients provide?:
- Competitive packages from £22-30k + bonuses
- Fantastic training and development with exposure to other departments within the club
- Great opportunities for progression to General Manager
- A fun and vibrant working environment

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Health & Fitness Managers

4Leisure are currently searching for talented and experienced Health & Fitness Managers across the UK. We’re recruiting for some of the most exclusive and best equipped health clubs in the industry and we’re looking to recruit the best talent on the market for these exciting opportunities.

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CHESHIRE HEALTH CLUB & SPA

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Government unveils alcohol plans

Pete Hayman

The government has unveiled plans to prohibit licensed retailers from selling alcohol below the rate of duty and VAT in England and Wales.

According to the Home Office proposals, new pricing controls would help reduce the level of alcohol-related crime and follows a review conducted last summer.

Crime prevention minister James Brokenshire said: “We know that pricing controls can help reduce alcohol-related violent crime and this is a crucial step in tackling the availability of cheap alcohol.”

In response to the government plans, British Beer and Pub Association chief executive Brigid Simmonds said: “This is a clear measure that can be implemented quickly and will stamp out the worst cases of below-cost selling. However, it will not have a significant impact on low-priced alcohol in supermarkets.”

Caffè Nero completes £140m refinancing

Pete Hayman

Italian coffee shop operator Caffè Nero has completed a £140m restructuring of its debt in order to fund its growth plans.

The group currently has a portfolio of nearly 500 stores in the UK and internationally, and is currently planning to open more than 50 new outlets in the UK each year. In addition to its UK operations, Caffè Nero is also looking to open around 40 coffee shops each year in international locations to add to its Turkish and Middle East portfolio.

SFA signs Vauxhall sponsorship deal

Pete Hayman

Car manufacturer Vauxhall Motors has become lead partner of all UK football associations after agreeing a three-and-a-half-year deal with the Scottish Football Association (SFA).

The agreement with SFA – which covers the Scottish men’s, women’s and youth national teams – follows similar deals with the Welsh, Northern Irish and English associations.

SFA chief executive Stewart Regan said: “Vauxhall’s marketing expertise will also ensure that our supporters and media partners can look forward to many exciting initiatives involving the national teams.”

The announcement comes after it was reported that England could play the three other Home Nations in one-off matches in 2013. Football Association (FA) general secretary Alex Horne has revealed that talks have been held over the possibility of England playing Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Horne said the fixtures could comprise part of the FA’s 150th anniversary, but he dismissed any revival of the Home International tournament, which was last staged in 1984.