

# LEISURE *management*

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## BRUCE POON TIP

The founder of Canada's G Adventures speaks out

## DAVID BARTON

The New York gym guru talks about coming back from Chapter 11 bankruptcy

## PORTLAND, OREGON

America's greenest city?

## HERZOG & DE MEURON

On creating the Serpentine Pavilion with Chinese artist Ai Weiwei

How the Cutty Sark rose from the ashes



Cadbury



official treat provider of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

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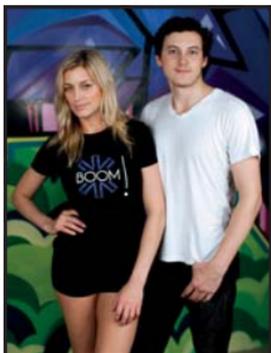
Did you know?



Wenlock is the mascot of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Mandeville is the mascot of the London 2012 Paralympics Games.



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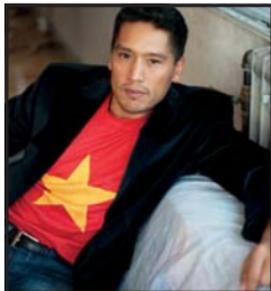
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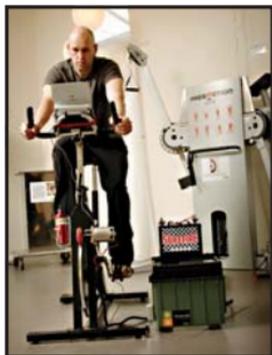
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His flamboyant health clubs attract clients including Renee Zellweger and Daniel Craig with a tagline of 'Look Better Naked'. Magali Robathan talks to the New York gym guru about building a business from scratch and moving forward after Chapter 11 bankruptcy

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Buyers' guide:  
For suppliers of products and services  
in the leisure markets, turn to p104

## First Angry Birds Land opens in Finland

The first Angry Birds-themed attraction has opened to the public at the Särkänniemi theme park in Tampere, Finland.

Based on the popular mobile game, the Angry Birds Land includes a number of themed rides and a large play area.

The attraction was a collaboration between Särkänniemi, the game's developer Rovio Entertainment and design company BDR Design Group. Playset manufacturer Lappset also worked on the project. The partnership plans to launch Angry Bird Lands across Europe and Asia.



The groundbreaking ceremony on the park site

## IMG Group secures deal for Dubai's Marvel park

Ilyas and Mustafa Galadari (IMG) Group has signed a licence agreement with Marvel Entertainment to develop a new branded visitor attraction in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Marvel Adventure, an indoor family entertainment centre, is scheduled to open by the end of 2013 and will form part of a new 1.2 million sq ft (111,484sq m) themed destination in the City of Arabia development. An official groundbreaking event has marked the start of work to construct the 350,000sq ft (32,516sq m) Marvel Adventure complex, which will include retail and dining facilities.

## Tourism recognised as driver of economic growth

The leaders of the world's 20 leading economies (G20) have recognised the role of travel and tourism in driving economic growth for the first time, following a meeting in Mexico in June.

A Leaders' Declaration signed in Los Cabos has underlined "the role of travel and tourism as a vehicle for job creation, economic growth and development". The 20 world leaders also pledged to "work towards developing travel facilitation initiatives in support of job creation, quality work, poverty reduction and global growth".

## "High end" brand for Club Med

Club Med Gym opened its latest fitness and wellbeing centre in the Place de la Bastille, in the heart of Paris, France in June. The club has been launched under the new Pure Club Med Gym brand, a concept designed to offer Club Med members additional comfort and services.

The new club has a top-end, contemporary feel, and was designed by the architectural firm Studio Marc Hertrich & Nicolas Adnet.

It operates in a similar way to a private members' club, with a cap of 2,000 members.

Facilities at the 1,300sq m club include a gym equipped by Technogym – including Kinesis, Vario and Pure Strength, plus integrated VisioWeb on all CV equipment.

There's also a Pavigym small group training zone. This is complemented by a studio



The new facility operates in a similar way to a private members' club

timetable offering more 70 sessions a week, including a number of classes exclusive to the new club. Membership costs 148 euro a month, paying on a month-by-month basis.

The club was designed with strong green credentials, as well as inclusivity: disabled users have full access to all facilities.

## Marriott makes first move into Azerbaijan

JW Marriott Absheron Baku, a new 243-bedroom overlooking the Caspian Sea and Baku's Azadliq Square, has become Marriott International's first property in Azerbaijan.

Located in the centre of one of the city's most prestigious neighbourhoods, the hotel has opened under a 50-year management agreement with Yeni Absheron Oteli LLC.

Hotel facilities include the 561sq m (6,039sq ft) Absheron Spa, which is situated on the 21st floor and contains five treatment rooms – including a double room. Elsewhere, the spa has Loofa and Rastul rooms; a steam bath and sauna; a manicure/pedicure room; and a relaxation room. There is also a roof-top indoor swimming pool.

Anne Semonin and Charme d'Orient products are used in the treatments on offer at the



The spa at JW Marriott Absheron Baku contains five treatment rooms

spa, which include a range of massages, facials, wraps and body scrubs.

Amy McPherson, president and managing director for Marriott International in Europe, said: "With its beautiful natural surroundings, fascinating history and vibrant nightlife, Baku is the perfect location to showcase our JW Marriott brand in Eastern Europe."

## Hotels launch new approach to carbon measurement

More than 20 leading international hotel groups have launched a new standardised approach to calculating and communicating the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings. Hilton Worldwide; Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group; and Shangri-La Hotels and

Resorts are among those involved with the Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI). The groups are working in partnership with International Tourism Partnership (ITP) and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) on the carbon reporting methodology.

## Japan's first Evian spa in Tokyo

Japan's first Evian-branded spa facility has been unveiled at Palace Hotel Tokyo – part of a US\$1.2bn (£965m, £771m) mixed-use development in the heart of the Japanese capital.

Located on the fifth floor of the hotel, the new 1,200sq m (12,197sq ft) spa has been inspired by the Alpine journey taken by the French company's natural mineral water.

Facilities include five treatment rooms and a spa suite – each named after an Alpine peak – as well as heated baths, a marble sauna, a cold plunge pool and a dry sauna.

Men's and women's relaxation lounges also form part of the Evian spa, which boasts views overlooking Tokyo's Imperial Palace Gardens and – on a clear day – Mount Fuji.

The treatment menu – like the spa's design – has taken inspiration from the purifying journey of Evian's natural mineral water and



The design has been inspired by the Alpine journey of Evian water

uses products from France-based Omnisens and Anne Semonin throughout.

MEC Design International Corporation led the design of Evian Spa, with Thermarium supplying the reclining bath and the marble sauna colour therapy. Other suppliers include Agape (a soaking tub within the spa suite), Earthlite (massage beds) and Florieh (head spa beds). FLOS was responsible for lighting.

## Continued growth for global theme parks

The international theme park industry continued to grow in 2011, with total admissions to the world's top 25 theme parks increasing by 4 per cent on the previous year. The figures come from the annual Global Attractions Attendance Report, published in partnership by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) and economic analyst AECOM. In total, the world's leading parks attracted 196 million visits last year – a new record level.

Asian parks performed particularly well during 2011, with the top 20 attractions reporting an increase of 7.5 per cent in total visits. Overall attendance passed the 100 million mark (103.3 million visitors) for the first time during the year.



PortAventura in Spain was among the parks to see an increase in visits

Within the region, Ocean Park in Hong Kong (29 per cent), Hong Kong Disneyland (14 per cent) and Nagashima Spa Land in Japan (30 per cent) all reported double-digit percentage attendance growth.

## SpaFinder Wellness acquires SpaFinder Europe

SpaFinder Wellness, the US-based spa and wellness media, marketing and gifting resource, announced the acquisition of SpaFinder Europe in July.

The European-based business was originally formed as a joint venture but will now become

a wholly-owned subsidiary of SpaFinder Wellness as a result of the deal.

SpaFinder Wellness chair and CEO Pete Ellis said the acquisition will allow the company to expand its network, services and products across the continent.

## Funding secured for AU\$700m Perth Stadium

Western Australia's government has confirmed AU\$375m (US\$370m, EUR289m, £234m) of funding towards the development of a new stadium on Perth's Burswood Peninsula. The funding announcement forms part of the State Budget 2012-13 and is more than a third of the development's anticipated AU\$700m (US\$690m, EUR540m, £437m) cost.

International design firm Populous has already been appointed to work on the design of the new stadium, with masterplanning due for completion in mid-2012.



Madonna is the face of the Hard Candy brand

## Hard Candy launches third club in Santiago, Chile

Hard Candy Fitness – the health club brand launched by Madonna in conjunction with New Evolution Ventures – has celebrated the opening of its newest location in Santiago, Chile.

The 3,000sq m facility is the third Hard Candy club following launches in Mexico City and Moscow, Russia.

Facilities include an aquatic centre and group fitness studios for dance, yoga, pilates and group cycling. With a high focus on design values, the health club is centred around an atrium area.

## UNESCO enters Northern Ireland resort dispute

UNESCO has called for a spa and golf resort project in Northern Ireland, UK, to be halted until the development's possible impact on the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site has been "properly assessed".

The £100m (US\$157m, €124m) Bushmills Dunes Golf Resort and Spa was given the green light by the province's environment minister Alex Attwood in February.

The development includes a 120-bed-room hotel with spa and conference facilities and an 18-hole golf course.

## Hilton unveils spa details at Burton 'football hotel'

Hilton has announced details of the health club and spa concepts that will be on offer at its two hotels at St George's Park, a new national football centre near Burton-on-Trent. The complex is being built by the Football Association (FA) and will feature Hilton and Hampton by Hilton-branded properties, which will share the health club and spa at St George's Park.

Spa facilities at the hotels include four treatment rooms offering services using Comfort Zone products. Treatment spaces will use mood lighting and music to create a "sensory environment".



Accor's Académie now operates in 72 countries

## Accor enters UK market with training academy

France-based hospitality giant Accor is to expand its Accor Académie training network by announcing the launch of the service in the UK market.

Accor has opened its new employee training campus in London and also announced a new apprenticeship scheme, an 'into-work' programme and a university placement scheme as part of an investment into the group's HR programme and significant job creation in the sector.

Accor Académie now operates in 72 countries. First launched in 1985, the Académie delivers more than 435,000 days of training a year and invests around €45m (£36m) per annum in training.

In 2011, more than 145,000 group employees were trained through modules adapted to the specific local challenges of each country and covering more than 100 hotel industry jobs.

Accor's Sophie Flak said: "Identifying, developing and retaining talented people is a crucial guarantee for Accor's strategy of conquest. With 40,000 new rooms every year, our mission is to train our employees on the ground, where they work"

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=F6M8L>

## First London hotel for citizenM

Netherlands-based hotel operator citizenM has launched its first property in London – in time for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The 192-bedroom hotel is in Bankside, an area located near sites such as the Globe theatre and the Tate Modern art attraction, and is designed to cater for "modern tourists".

citizenM worked alongside Dutch architects Concrete on the design of the hotel, which includes an open-plan lobby. Kesselskramer, Vitra and Swisscom Hospitality Services also partnered with citizenM on the project.

Facilities include canteenM, a self-serve eatery designed to feel like a home kitchen and allows guests to select food before using one of four iMacs in the hotel's 'working space'

The group opened its first property in Amsterdam four years ago, and has already



citizenM has worked with architects Concrete on the new London hotel

expanded to the UK with a hotel in Glasgow. Two more citizenM-branded properties are due to open in London over the coming year.

citizenM chief operating officer Michael Levie said: "This city is one of the main stages of the hospitality world but we're ready."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K5e2p>

## Green light for 'fast-built' London hotel

A new £15m Park Plaza hotel on London's Western Avenue, which is to use a "fast-built" system where most of its elements are built off-site, has been given the green light.

Capita Symonds' ESA design practice is behind the proposals on behalf of the PPHE Hotel Group, which will see the 160-bedroom hotel constructed opposite Park Royal tube station.

Many of the components – such as ground floor facilities and completed bedrooms – will be stacked together to form the completed building as part of the modular concept.

ESA's Marek Sroka said: "The flexible modular building system and unique façade design the team has developed has allowed us



Most of the new London hotel's components will be constructed off-site

a good degree of freedom and flexibility as it is the construction process that we have standardised, not the design."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=y5k3Z>

## Firmdale Hotels relaunches Dorset Square Hotel

Firmdale Hotels has announced the launch of the new-look Dorset Square Hotel in central London, following the completion of an extensive refurbishment programme.

Husband and wife team Kit and Tim Kemp originally purchased the boutique hotel during

the 1980s and have now reacquired it for the Firmdale portfolio, 10 years after it was sold.

Dorset Square Hotel features 38 bedrooms, as well as The Potting Shed bar and restaurant. It joins Firmdale's six other London hotels.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=yu4S>



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## Empire Cinemas signs deal for Walthamstow venue

Empire Cinemas, one of the UK's largest independently-owned cinema chains, has signed an agreement for a new multi-screen venue on Walthamstow High Street, London. The deal was signed with developers Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA) and Hill Residential, with the cinema to form part of a wider regeneration of the area.

A nine-screen, fully digital complex with Empire Cinema's large screen format, IMPACT, is planned for the site and could be open by 2014 subject to planning.



The historic venue has been completely revamped

## New casino opens at Hippodrome Theatre

London's former Hippodrome Theatre has reopened as a casino, following a major transformation led by father and son team Jimmy and Simon Thomas.

More than £40m has been invested in creating the new Hippodrome Casino gaming venue – housed in the theatre and adjacent Cranbourn Mansions in Leicester Square. The casino will offer three floors of gaming; a 180-seat cabaret theatre called The Matcham Room; the 150-cover Heliot restaurant; four private dining rooms; and five bars. *Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T1w8v>*

## £25m Casino planned for Middlesbrough

Stockton-based Jomast Developments has announced it has secured Middlesbrough's large casino licence – one of eight UK areas in which such licences are to be made available. The developer is planning a £25m leisure and entertainment scheme in the heart of the town centre, which will transform the Gurney House building and adjoining car parks. In addition to a new casino, Jomast's plans include the provision of a luxury hotel, a budget hotel and banqueting facilities, as well as restaurants. Plus3 Architecture has been working with Jomast on the plans.

## Emirates Air Line service opens

Emirates Air Line, the new 1.1km (0.7-mile) cable car service linking Greenwich with the Royal Docks in London, embarked on its first passenger flight on 28 June.

Mayor Boris Johnson officially launched the new service spanning the river Thames, which offers panoramic views overlooking the capital and has taken nearly a year to construct.

A total of 34 cabins will cater for up to 2,500 people each hour, travelling at a height of 90m (295ft) above the Thames. The cable car attraction was designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects.

In addition to providing a new transport link to the east of the city, the Emirates Air Line will also allow people to take a non-stop return journey, allowing them to experience the views overlooking London.



London's Emirates Air Line connects the Royal Docks with Greenwich

Johnson, said: "The Emirates Air Line is a stunning addition to London's transport network, providing a much needed new connection across the Thames."

Mace Macro will operate the line, which has been built by Mace working with Aedas, Buro Happold, and Doppelmayr.

## London F1 street race vision unveiled

Santander, lead sponsor of the British Formula One Grand Prix, has unveiled its vision for a street-race route incorporating some of London's most iconic landmarks.

Populous were appointed to compile a feasibility study on behalf of Santander, which has included the production of a concept film of how a London Grand Prix would look.

The proposed 5.1km (3.1-mile) London street-race has been conceived as a night event and incorporates a start/finish straight on The Mall.

Cars would travel at high speed in front of Buckingham Palace, around Parliament Square, along the Embankment and up to Trafalgar Square, with a total of 14 corners included in the planned route.



The concept sees cars speed past landmarks such as Buckingham Palace

Plans were shaped by Populous' experience working on Silverstone's new circuit, together with "cockpit insights" from British drivers Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button.

*Details: <http://lei.sr?a=O4N5E>*

## Powerleague owner joins Goals Soccer Centre race

Patron Sports Holding, the owner of five-a-side football facility operator Powerleague, has confirmed it is considering a takeover approach for rival group Goals Soccer Centres.

Patron has said it is "currently considering its options" with regards to Goals Soccer

Centres, but said there was no guarantee that it will be making a bid for the business.

Goals Soccer Centres has also been subject to an approach from Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the Canada-based pension fund. *Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=W9ai>*

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## New body confidence guide to help parents

A new guide launched by non-profit organisation Media Smart to help parents educate their children about body confidence issues has received the backing of the Home Office.

The body image parent pack is designed for all young people aged between six and 11-years-old and has been designed to explain how the media can alter images, which can then impact on self-esteem.

Children are encouraged to think about why such images have been changed, while the new pack also looks at how the "perfect" body has evolved through the ages.



Everyone Active was among the Flame winners

## Winners of 2012 Flame awards announced

The winners of the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) and Matrix Flame Awards for 2012 have been announced at the Ball of Fire – the finale of the Flame Conference. An audience of 800 delegates spanning the UK health and fitness sector attended the awards ceremony, which was held at Sheffield's Ponds Forge International on 27 June.

Among the winners of the FIA and Matrix Flame Awards 2012 was Everyone Active, which picked up two prizes – Leisure Centre Operator of the Year and Spark of Innovation (Operator).

Meanwhile, there were also awards for the LivingWell Health Club in Maidstone, Kent – Club of the Year (under 1,000 members); Chartham Park Golf and Country Club, West Sussex – Club of the Year (1,000-3,000 members); Benton Hall Golf and Country Club, Essex – Club of the Year (more than 3,000 members); and Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket – Centre of the Year.

The Flame Awards have been delivered by the FIA for more than 15 years and are designed to celebrate excellence in the UK sector. *Details:* <http://lei.sr?a=q2T8H>

## Snap Fitness enters UK market

Snap Fitness, the US-based fitness franchise founded in 2003, has made its first move into the UK with the launch of a new 7,000sq ft (650sq m) club in Sittingbourne, Kent.

The group is the franchisor of more than 1,300 facilities around the world and is looking to expand across the UK, with plans in place for between 75 and 100 locations over the next five years.

A second facility is due to open in Milton Keynes, with Snap Fitness joining forces with Jordan Fitness to supply its new gyms in the UK. Matrix and Octane Fitness will also provide equipment.

The Sittingbourne club has been equipped with kit such as Olympic discs, fit balls and mats, as well as a range of dumbbells that have been exclusively branded for Snap Fitness. Facilities also include cardiovascular



Snap Fitness has ambitious UK expansion plans for the next five years

and strength equipment, while group cycling classes and studio-based programmes such as Pilates are to be offered in future.

*To read more about Snap Fitness' expansion into India, see Health Club Management 2011 Issue 8, p52: <http://lei.sr?a=goZqj>  
Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=171oQ>*

## Virgin Active opens £8m London club

Virgin Active has announced the opening of its newest club at 200 Aldersgate in the City of London, following an £8m investment in the design and construction of the facility.

It is one of the group's largest launches, with the flagship Classic Health Club incorporating a large gym floor and offering equipment such as 3D balance tool Core-Tex.

Freedom Climber, which allows users to climb while using a rotating wall, and a PowerPlate Pro6 combining vibrations with resistance training are also among equipment on offer.

Elsewhere, the Classic Health Club boasts Queenax equipment – combining suspension and functional training – and Wattbike, as well as Technogym's Kinesis stations.



Queenax equipment has been installed at the new 200 Aldersgate venue

A comprehensive group exercise timetable includes AntiGravity Yoga and CXWORX, a strengthening/toning core workout devised by Les Mills and set to high energy music. *Read more:* <http://lei.sr?a=QzB3E>

## Les Mills introduces new dance programme

Group exercise programme provider Les Mills has introduced its SH'BAM programming to the UK fitness market.

Featuring simple dance moves to music, the SH'BAM workout has been designed to allow people of all abilities to take part.

Unlike other dance-inspired workouts that offer just one style of dance, SH'BAM combines basic dance choreography with a soundtrack of chart-topping hits, dance music, remixes of classics and modern Latin tracks. SH'BAM launched in the UK at the start of July.

## Social media platform for cyclists

British Cycling and broadcasting company Sky have launched a new social network called Social Cycling Groups, which is designed to help people connect with other cyclists in their communities.

The online platform, which can be accessed for free via the goskyride.com website, gives people who might otherwise be cycling alone the chance to buddy up with other cyclists and join unlimited groups and rides in their area.

With dates, distances, durations and maps, people can choose the group and ride that is best for them.

People can also visit goskyride.com, the home of recreational activities, to create Social Cycling Groups and rides of their own, adding their own routes or using British Cycling's recommended routes.



The social network will enable cyclists to team up

New figures released by British Cycling show that almost half of its near 50,000-strong members are not involved in club cycling. However, many cyclists feel they would like to have someone else to ride with.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b7s4H>

## Report: London 2012 to deliver GDP boost

London 2012, its build-up and subsequent legacy will generate £16.5bn of gross domestic product (GDP) for the UK's economy, according to Lloyds Banking Group (LBG).

A new report by the group said construction and tourism were the key sectors in driving the economic boost, with the Games supporting 354,000 jobs throughout the UK.

The *Economic Impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games* covers the period from London being announced as host city in 2005 through to 2017 – a five-year legacy period.

LBG said the UK economy will be boosted by £5bn worth of games-related GDP in the legacy period following the Games – particularly in terms of physical infrastructure.



The 2012 Games will deliver benefits both this year and in years to come

LBG chief economic Patrick Foley said: "As this new study demonstrates, London 2012 will help support employment, tourism, consumer spending and living standards, not only this year, but for many years to come."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j2h6H>

## September opening for Swansea watersports facility

A new £1.4m centre of excellence for watersports will be developed by Swansea Council on the Welsh city's seafront is due to open to the public in September.

Located opposite St Helen's, the scheme will provide a facility for sports such as kayaking

and windsurfing and is designed to be "inclusive and accessible to everyone".

The centre has been funded by Visit Wales, the European Regional Development Fund and the Welsh government.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=09B7B>

## August opening for new £9m York Sport Village

A new £9m sports complex is to be unveiled by the University of York (UY) and the City of York Council (CYC) near the Grimston Bar Park and Ride site in August.

Sir Robert McAlpine has been the contractor tasked with building York Sport Village, which was designed by Space Architects and will include a 120-station fitness suite. Technogym and Schwinn have supplied equipment. Three studios for dance, group cycling and aerobics; a competition-standard eight-lane, 25m swimming pool; a learner pool; and a sauna and steam-rooms are also among the facilities.



The partnership is to increase grassroot sport

## LTA joins forces with TFF to promote tennis

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Tennis for Free (TFF) have announced a joint partnership deal to help increase UK participation. The programme will include a combination of capital and revenue investment by the LTA to improve tennis facilities and initiatives on offer to help attract new players.

Facilities that qualify for extra LTA funding will then benefit from TFF working with local coaches to provide free tennis coaching. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=K9SoU>

## ISG to build London college sports facility

ISG has been awarded a contract for the construction of a new £3.5m "highly sustainable" facility at King's College London's (KCL) Honor Oak Park sports ground.

The BREEAM Excellent-rated development is designed by Loates-Taylor Shannon Architects and Designers and includes a two-storey brick and block work building. On the ground floor of the centre will be 10 changing rooms to be used by KCL's hockey, rugby and football teams, as well as by visiting teams from other universities.

## Focus to work on Coventry Transport Museum project

Focus Consultants has been appointed as lead consultant on a new project to transform Coventry Transport Museum into an "internationally significant" attraction.

The project is in line to secure a £4.9m grant after it received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and will include a major overhaul of exhibition spaces.

Plans also include the revitalisation of the Grade I-listed Old Grammar School, which will be brought back into use as a public access archive and educational facility.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=U8v8r>



RAMM reopened last year after a £24m revamp

## RAMM wins Art Fund Prize 2012

Exeter's Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) has been crowned winner of the 2012 Art Fund Prize for Museums and Galleries at an event held in London.

The museum reopened last December following a major £24m refurbishment and held off competition from three other institutions to pick up the £100,000 award.

RAMM was established in 1868, with its founding principles influenced by Prince Albert's "cultural ideals" of art, science, design and technology combined in one universal vision.

## Details of Renaissance fund revealed by ACE

Arts Council England (ACE) has revealed further details of its Renaissance Strategic fund, which is part of a number of measures in support of the museum sector.

The programme will be delivered in two stages – the first in 2012-13 will see £7m made available and the second will invest up to £15m a year in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Renaissance Strategic investment will be directed at locations not served by Major partners, with the East Midlands and South Yorkshire among the first set to benefit.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=K6W5p>

## Work begins on Bannockburn

Scottish culture secretary Fiona Hyslop has helped mark the start of work on a new multi-million pound visitor centre designed to celebrate the Battle of Bannockburn.

Mansell Construction Services has been appointed to deliver the attraction near Stirling, which was designed by a team led by Edinburgh-based Reiach and Hall.

Sinclair Knight Merz; Turner and Townsend; and KJ Tait form part of the project's design team, while Bright White and Ian White Associates are also involved.

The Scottish government has contributed £5m towards the new visitor centre, which aims to enhance the Bannockburn site and explore its significance in Scottish history.

A further £4.1m has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the attraction set



The visitor complex has been designed by a team led by Reiach and Hall

to be completed in 2014 – the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn.

Temporary visitor facilities will be provided once an existing visitor centre at the site is shut on 31 October, before being demolished. An outreach programme is also planned.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=M7W1g>

## Survey reveals 'devastating impact' of cuts

New research carried out by the Museums Association (MA) has uncovered the "devastating impact" of funding cuts on heritage attractions throughout the UK.

More than 110 museum services and institutions took part in the association's survey, with 51 per cent reporting a reduction to their budgets compared with April 2011.

Nearly a quarter have been forced to reduce public access by shutting whole or part of sites either temporarily or permanently, while 11 per cent have permanently closed whole sites.

Other findings from the survey showed that 42 per cent of participants had reduced staffing levels, with nearly a third seeing budgets reduced by more than a tenth.



More than 110 services and institutions participated in the MA's survey

However, 36 per cent of those who responded to the survey expect to increase the quality of service over the next year – compared with 13 per cent at the same stage last year.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=b9c9g>

## English Heritage sites net outside learning awards

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom has awarded the first 10 national Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTc) Site Provider Awards to English Heritage sites.

Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire and Dover Castle in Kent are among the first 10 recipients

of the award – a new benchmark to accredit sites that meets the needs of school visitors.

The awards were launched in May following the success of the LOTc Quality Badge, which has accredited more than 850 organisations. Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=k7c1f>



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## 'Unprecedented demand' for Irish Sports scheme

More than 2,150 sports clubs and organisations throughout Ireland have submitted bids for support through the government's 2012 Sports Capital Programme.

According to minister of state for tourism and sport Michael Ring, the demand for funding has been substantial with €750 (£6) sought for every EUR1 (£0.80) made available. Ring said: "It means that we will only be able to allocate a fraction of the funding sought and the task of assessing applications will be very difficult."

Details: [www.transport.ie](http://www.transport.ie)



The initiative targets the UK's older population

## £37m scheme to improve quality of life for the elderly

A new £37m initiative has been launched with the support of government funding to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for nearly 170,000 older people across the UK.

The DALLAS (delivering assisted living lifestyles at scale) programme will examine new methods of using "innovative" products and services in order to create more independent lifestyles. Four consortia tasked with operating the initiative – developed by the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) – have secured £25m worth of government funding.

The consortia have also made financial contributions towards the DALLAS programme, along with funding from the National Institute for Health Research and the Scottish Government.

Year Zero will provide an online application allowing individuals to manage personal health information and Liverpool's Feelgood Factory will encourage people to plan their futures. Living It Up will develop solutions to allow Scottish communities to adopt healthy lifestyles and the UK-wide i-Focus scheme offers services to help people feel more comfortable at home.

TSB chief executive Iain Gray said: "The DALLAS programme is about redesigning and delivering a new approach."

## Plans to cap tax relief cancelled

The Art Fund is among a number of charitable organisations to welcome George Osborne's decision to drop plans to introduce a cap on tax relief on donations of more than £50,000.

HM Treasury's cap would have also applied to gifts worth 25 per cent of a charity's income and was designed to prevent individuals using the available reliefs to avoid paying tax. It is estimated that £11bn is donated to charities each year, 45 per cent of which is thought to come from a mere 7 per cent of donors – most of whom are higher-rate taxpayers.

However, Osborne said: "I can confirm that we will proceed next year with a cap on income tax reliefs for wealthy people, but we won't be capping relief for giving money to charity. It is clear from our conversations with charities



Chancellor George Osborne dropped plans to cap the relief at £50,000

that any kind of cap could damage donations, and as I said at the Budget that's not what we want at all. So we've listened."

Art Fund director Stephen Deuchar said: "The plan to cap relief on charitable donations would have had a detrimental impact on all charities and their causes."

## £11.3m for 'shovel-ready' heritage projects

Scottish culture secretary Fiona Hyslop has announced additional investment worth £11.3m for a number of "shovel-ready" cultural heritage projects throughout the country. Among the schemes to benefit from the cash injection is the development of Lews Castle in Stornoway into a hotel and museum, which has secured £1.6m over two years.

Creative Scotland has been awarded £3m of additional funding over three years in order to support more projects and provide better facilities for artists and audiences. Meanwhile, Historic Scotland has received a further £2m towards ensuring heritage assets continue to be maintained effectively, reducing the need for repairs in future.



Lews Castle in Stornoway, one of the sites to benefit from the funding

Hyslop said: "This funding for shovel-ready culture and heritage projects will inject growth into the economy, demonstrating how this government is using all the powers we have to create new opportunities for our people." Details: <http://www.creativescotland.com>

## English Heritage welcomes government reforms

English Heritage, the national historic environment agency, has welcomed a number of reforms contained with the newly-published Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill.

Among alterations to the legislation is the merger of conservation area consent back

into the planning system, while the establishment of Heritage Partnership agreements has also been enabled. The organisation said improvements to the heritage protection system contained within the new-look bill had been sought for a number of years.

## Spa to open at Wyboston Lakes

A new spa facility being built at Wyboston Lakes, the independently-owned conference and leisure destination in Bedfordshire, is to open during the third quarter of 2012.

Located within Wyboston Lakes Hotel, Y Spa will incorporate a total of 11 therapy rooms – three of which will be couples' rooms – steamrooms, water beds and relaxation areas with reading pods.

A signature feature of the new spa will be the external hydro pool and kelo sauna in a south-facing spa garden, along with an open air fireplace.

R-Spa Limited, the consultancy set up by former Champneys Health Resorts managing director Ray Payne, is working on the design and feasibility of the new spa area.

Emma-Jane North has been appointed director of the Y Spa at Wyboston Lakes, while it



An external hydro pool will be a signature feature at the new spa facility

has also been announced that products supplied by Elemis and Murad will be used.

North said: "We wanted to inspire our guests and deliver real results with our treatments – our choice of Elemis and Murad proved the perfect partnership."

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=n457m>

## £5m spa complex proposed for Brighton

A new £5m spa resort with an outdoor swimming pool could be built on the seafront in Brighton, after the proposals received the green light from the local authority.

Members of Brighton and Hove City Council's economic development and culture committee have agreed in principle to the development of the long-vacant Peter Pan's Playground site.

Plans for the Brighton Bathing Pavilion resort were tabled by Karma Royal Group (KRG), which has now been chosen as preferred bidder by the council for the site overlooking the English Channel.

KRG's proposals for the spa resort include five pavilions – housing an indoor and outdoor children's club; a year-round spa and health



The new spa resort is to be located on the seafront

centre; a beach club and restaurant; an outdoor swim and bathing area; and a member's club. All zones except the members' club will be open to the general public.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=ViR0r>

## New £3m spa facility for Watergate Bay Hotel

Cornwall's Watergate Bay Hotel has unveiled a new spa following the completion of a £3m project to create 'active relaxation spaces and a 25m infinity swimming pool. The new space boasts three treatment rooms, a manicure and pedicure room overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, a fitness room with cardiovascular machines and a café bar. A traditional Canadian hot tub, a timber boardwalk direct to the beach, poolside terraces and a new hotel entrance are among exterior improvements that also formed part of the scheme.



The former garage has undergone a revamp

## Former garage turned into a luxury spa in Durham

A luxury spa has been created at a former garage in County Durham, which once provided early motorists with a stopping point on trips between England and Scotland.

Due to open in November, The Garage has been designed by Blue Spa and Leisure as a 'quintessential English spa' and will include five single treatment rooms and a couples' suite with outdoor bath.

Wet facilities at the 450sq m (4,844sq ft) spa will include a mud pit Rasul, a hammam and a salt room, in addition to a salt room and three red cedar hot tubs.

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## Capita Symonds to manage Belfast park revamp

Capita Symonds, the UK-based property and infrastructure consultancy, has been appointed to project manage a €2m redevelopment of Dunville Park in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The Grade B+ park covers 4.4 acres (1.8 hectares) and will benefit from the construction of a new floodlit 3G sports pitch; a sports pavilion; events spaces; and playgrounds. Dunville Park is located on the corner of the Falls and Grosvenor Roads in Belfast. It was gifted to the people of Belfast by the Dunville family and will also benefit from conservation work.



An artist's impression of the planned new park

## LLDC submits plans for Olympic Park eco-hub

Plans for a new community hub in north London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park have been submitted by the London Legacy Development Corporation.

The facility will be located in the North Park – one of the first areas to reopen after the 2012 Games – and will provide a local ecology-themed community building and play space. Erect Architecture are behind the designs for the new community hub, which is to feature some of the most "imaginative" play facilities in the UK, as well as a café and a flexible space.

## Woodland Trust names 60 UK Diamond Woods

The Woodland Trust (WT) has confirmed the sites of 60 new woodlands, which are being created across the UK in order to mark The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Each of the Diamond Woods will be at least 60 acres (24.3 hectares) in size and are located in every area of the UK in a bid to provide a green legacy from The Queen's reign and to create opportunities for everyone to plant trees.

Meanwhile, The Princess Royal has officially opened the flagship Diamond Jubilee Wood in Leicestershire.

## Five historic parks to share £7.9m

Five historic parks across the UK have been awarded a share of £7.9m towards major restoration projects from the National Lottery as part of the Parks for People funding programme. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery Fund (BIG) have confirmed joint grants for three English parks, while the HLF has also awarded funding to two Scottish parks.

Northumberland Park, North Shields (£2.2m); the Isabella Plantation at Richmond Park in London; and Eastwood Park in Derby (£1.1m) are the recipients of the joint funding.

Meanwhile, Rouken Glen Park in East Renfrewshire (£2.1m) and Dock Park in Dumfries (£991,300) are the recipients of HLF grants towards their respective redevelopment projects. A further six parks have received



Isabella Plantation, one of the parks to receive funding from the HLF

initial support towards development projects – five across England from HLF and BIG and one in Scotland park from HLF.

Each of the projects are designed to safeguard the long-term future of the parks through the upgrade of facilities, the restoration of historic features and a range of new education programmes.

## London's first urban beach opens in Fulham

London's first urban beach has been opened by Hammersmith and Fulham Council (HFC) as part of a wider £8m programme of improvements being carried out at Bishops Park.

The new beach has been inspired by families from across the capital who would travel to the park's "Margate Sands" in Fulham each summer during Edwardian times. First unveiled in 1903, Bishops Park beach fell into a state of disrepair during the Second World War before being permanently closed in 1949 on safety grounds.

In addition to the restoration and reopening of the urban beach, the ornamental lake and the café at Bishops Park have been revitalised. Three new play areas have also been added.



The urban park concept was popular during Edwardian times

Meanwhile, a stretch of what is thought to be the longest medieval moat in England has been excavated at Fulham Palace – the Bishop of London's former home – as part of the programme of improvements.

## New-look visitor centre unveiled at Welsh forest park

Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTC) has officially opened a new-look visitor centre and a family mountain bike trail at the Afan Forest Park in South Wales.

It is hoped the Rookie – a green-graded (beginner) trail – will attract more mountain

biking tourists to the area, which will provide a "substantial boost" to the local economy.

Improvements to the visitor centre include a revamped café and a renovated foyer, which is designed to provide a better access to the South Wales' Miners Museum.

## Sunesis leisure concept launched

Scape and Willmott Dixon have launched a new version of their build concept Sunesis for the UK's leisure industry, following its success across the education sector.

Sunesis Leisure – unveiled at the Local Government Association conference on 26 June – is designed to offer public sector clients a quick procurement route and ready-made design solutions.

It is thought the approach will reduce the overall build programme from inception through to opening by a year, as well as achieving 25 per cent cost savings.

As reported by *Leisure Opportunities* in June, Sunesis Leisure will allow clients to develop a wide range of facilities – including swimming, fitness, sports and spa areas.

Sunesis Leisure offers three designs, which have been created with the help of industry



Each of the three design options come with swimming and learner pools

experts and each contain a swimming pool and learner pool of varying sizes.

From there, the design can be customised with additional facilities such as a health and fitness suite, spa, sauna and therapy options, and a sports hall also available.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=a5W7p>

## RIBA announces 2012 award winners

National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and the Olympic Stadium in London are among this year's winners of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Awards.

Winners range from a house built in the shape of a sand dune in Suffolk to the London 2012 Olympic Stadium, and from a demountable opera pavilion in High Wycombe to the radical transformation of a Spanish bull-fighting arena in Barcelona, Spain.

A dominant theme among this year's winners was the inclusion of a number of major public arts buildings – 10 of which have made the grade. Many are the result of pre-recession lottery funding and include Bath's Holburne Museum (Eric Parry Architects);



London's Olympic Stadium is among the winners of a 2012 RIBA Award

the Hepworth Wakefield (David Chipperfield Architects); and the Turner Contemporary at Margate (David Chipperfield Architects).

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=i2l9j>

## Brentford FC acquires land for stadium development

Brentford Football Club (BFC) has moved forward with plans for the development of a new community stadium in west London after it acquired land from Barratt Homes.

The 7.6-acre (3.1-hectare) site was first purchased by the development company more

than four years ago and is working with the League One club on the stadium scheme.

BFC is proposing to build a 15,000-capacity venue on the land, while having the option for expanding to 20,000 seats at a later stage. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=T466v>

## Architects appointed to Belfast stadium project

Hamilton Architects have been appointed by the Irish Football Association to lead the integrated consulting team for Northern Ireland's National Stadium Project.

The Belfast-based design practice joins Edmond Shipway, Arup, Rider Levett Bucknall and Ben Veenbrink on working on the multi-million pound development.

Designs are to be drawn up for an 18,000-capacity venue on the site of the existing stadium at Windsor Park, with plans to be submitted by December.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=piV5H>



The Beorma scheme is funded by Salhia

## First phase of Birmingham project receives approval

Birmingham City Council has approved the first phase of the new £150m Beorma Quarter – a mixed-use scheme in Digbeth dominated by a 27-storey building.

Work is due to start on phase one in September and will include a new 60,000sq ft (5,574sq m) hotel and the revamp of a Grade II-listed cold storage building.

Kuwait-based Salhia is funding the project, having signed a deal with HSBC earlier this year for the first phase. The bank is contributing more than £10m.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=M7f3a>

## Work starts on Trowbridge leisure development

Bristol-based Leadbitter Group has commenced construction work on the new multi-million pound St Stephens Place Leisure Park development in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. The scheme was given the green light by Wiltshire Council earlier this year and is to include a seven-screen cinema run by Odeon and an 80-bedroom Premier Inn hotel. Restaurants, cafés and bars are also planned as part of the project, which will transform a "long-neglected" part of the town centre. Details: <http://lei.sr?a=F3ejj>

# NHS plans to build commercial hotel

Cambridge University Hospitals has announced that it's looking for a strategic partner for its planned Forum development, which will include a hotel, private hospital and conference centre. Pete Hayman reports

A commercial hotel forms part of the vision

**A**t a time when the nation's public finances are under strain, there has been far-reaching debate as to where efficiencies can be made by the government.

The National Health Service (NHS) is one area earmarked for major reform, but already one trust is embarking on a project among the first of its kind in the UK and one that it hopes will deliver operational and financial returns.

Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH), a foundation trust responsible for Addenbrooke's and the Rosie hospitals in Cambridge, is looking to secure a strategic partner for The Forum – a multi-million pound development planned at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC).

The Forum is designed to cater for the future expansion of the CBC and will be situated on a 35,500sq m (382,119sq ft) site. Among its components will be a commercial hotel – part of CUH's bid to pursue "new and innovative approaches" to developing the facilities.

"The Forum is a combination of a hotel, an education and conferencing centre and private hospital," says CUH director of corporate development St Clair Armitage. "A partnership vehicle, which we will form jointly with our strategic partner, will be responsible for delivering all three elements."

Armitage explains that the strategic partner will determine the size and scale of The Forum, with the joint partnership vehicle to be responsible for the management of the facilities.

The planned development was born from a need for facilities to support the



**"The Forum is a combination of a hotel, an education and conferencing centre and a private hospital"**

St Clair Armitage

expanding CBC, says Armitage. Not only is the campus home to CUH's two hospitals, but also to a number of research companies including GlaxoSmithKline and the Wellcome Trust.

## A NEW SOURCE OF REVENUE

But while the provision of accommodation and conference facilities is at the heart of the venture, there is another element to it. "There is a secondary requirement," says Armitage. "The trust wishes to receive a revenue stream from the development."

Armitage says that 100 per cent of revenue generated by the new hotel and The Forum is to be reinvested by CUH into supporting its NHS activities.

A CUH spokesperson added that both Addenbrooke's and the Rosie

already offer facilities for the relatives of patients who are visiting the hospitals for a long period of time. The primary purpose of the new hotel, as Armitage points out, will be to cater for the "variety of people" who use the CBC.

"Today, about 10,000 people come to work here on a daily basis. By the time the campus developments are complete, there should be somewhere in the region of 18,000-20,000 people coming to work here every day," he says.

"We want the hotel to be of high quality," Armitage continues. "But we expect it will have, as most hotels do, a variety of facilities that will attract different rates at different times. We've said that the hotel and conferencing centre should include the ability to service conferences up to about 600 delegates. And it will include a variety of catering and other facilities as you would expect from a quality hotel."

CUH will not be responsible for operating facilities built as part of The Forum project; rather, it will be down to the new partnership vehicle that will be established alongside the strategic partner being sought by the trust.

The CUH is hoping to find a partner within the next 12 months, before work is carried out to finalise The Forum's design. The project is set to be completed in 2015 at the earliest.

Whether it offers a benchmark for other large NHS trusts to follow remains to be seen, but CUH's vision for The Forum has the potential to generate valuable revenue to support NHS activities at a time when government purse strings are being tightened. ●

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# Design news

From London Grand Prix proposals to a French cultural centre, we look at what's new

<b>Project</b>	London Grand Prix
<b>Design</b>	Populous
<b>Location</b>	London, UK

## Vision for London Grand Prix unveiled

Santander, lead sponsor of the British Formula One Grand Prix, has unveiled its vision for a street-race route incorporating some of London's most iconic landmarks.

Populous were appointed to compile the detailed feasibility study for the proposals on behalf of Santander. Under the proposals, the 5.1km (3.1-mile) London street-race has been conceived as a night event and incorporates a start/finish straight located on The Mall. The route incorporates 14 corners and passes Buckingham Palace.



Buckingham Palace features on the route



The playground has been designed for older children

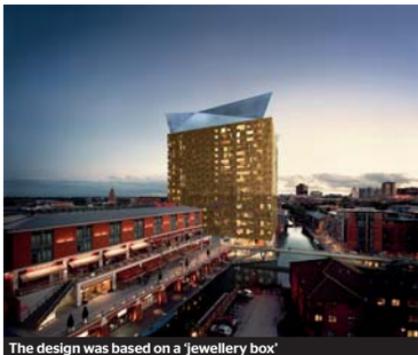
<b>Project</b>	Jubilee Gardens Playspace
<b>Design</b>	Frosts Landscapes
<b>Location</b>	London, UK

## Jubilee Gardens restoration complete

Jubilee Gardens Playspace opened at the end of June on London's South Bank, completing the transformation of Jubilee Gardens ahead of the Olympic Games.

The playground was designed by Frosts Landscapes and features a range of Timberplay equipment including a large climbing structure, a 'Timberwood Tangle' and a flock of wobbly sheep. The space is overlooked by the London Eye.

Created in 1977, Jubilee Gardens were restored by Dutch landscape architects West 8 in time for the Queen's Jubilee.



The design was based on a 'jewellery box'

<b>Project</b>	The Cube
<b>Design</b>	Ken Shuttleworth & Make Architects
<b>Location</b>	Birmingham, UK

## The Cube wins RIBA prize

The Cube, based in Birmingham's Mailbox district, has won the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) regional award for the West Midlands category, securing it a place on the RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist.

The 25-storey mixed use building was designed by Ken Shuttleworth and his team at Make Architects, and houses boutique hotel Hotel Indigo, private health club and spa the clubandspa, Marco Pierre White's Steak House, Brazilian restaurant Rodizio Rico plus offices and apartments.



The Four Seasons Baku features 171 guest rooms

<b>Project</b>	Four Seasons Baku
<b>Design</b>	Reardon Smith
<b>Location</b>	Baku, Azerbaijan

## Baku's latest five star hotel opens

The Four Seasons has opened in Baku, Azerbaijan, joining seven other five star hotels that have opened in the city in the past year.

The hotel, which has been designed in the 'French beaux arts style' features 171 guest rooms – including 29 suites – almost all with balconies and views of the Caspian Sea or of Baku's Old City. It also has a penthouse spa, a seventh floor swimming pool set underneath a glass atrium and than 1,800 sq m of function space.

Reardon Smith were responsible for the architecture, and interior design was by Richmond International.

See feature on Baku, *Leisure Management*, Q2 2012, p40



The cultural centre will be situated on the riverfront

<b>Project</b>	MECA
<b>Design</b>	BIG architects
<b>Location</b>	Bordeaux, France

## BIG designs MECA to culture in Bordeaux

An architectural team led by BIG architects has won the competition to design a new 12,000sq m cultural centre on Bordeaux's riverfront, merging three cultural institutions.

The new Maison de L'Economie Creative et de la Culture en Aquitaine (MECA) will incorporate new centres for contemporary art, performing art and literature and movies. The building is conceived as a 'single loop of public space and cultural institutions'. The outside of MECA can be transformed into a stage for concerts and art installations.



The gardens are Singapore's latest attraction

<b>Project</b>	Gardens by the Bay
<b>Design</b>	Wilkinson Eyre Architects
<b>Location</b>	Singapore

## Gardens by the Bay opens in Singapore

Singapore's newest tourist attraction, Gardens by the Bay, opened at the end of June.

UK-based Wilkinson Eyre Architects has worked with Grant Associates, Atelier One, Land Design Studio and Atelier Ten on the 101-hectare (249-acre) first phase of the project.

The gardens feature two lakes, the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest conservatories, the Heritage Gardens and the 'Supertrees', measuring between 25m and 50m in height; two of which are connected by a 128m public walkway.



# HILARY GILBERT

American Hilary Gilbert started indoor cycling to help stay trim for a career in modelling. A decade on, her frustration with existing indoor cycling offerings in the UK has driven her to set up Boom! Cycle in London's Shoreditch. She talks to Rhianon Howells

## What's your professional background?

I grew up in Kentucky, middle America, and started modelling when I was 15, doing small-time advertising campaigns and catalogue work. It wasn't until after I graduated from college in 2001 – I studied biology at Northern Kentucky University – that I was scouted by a New York modelling agency. So I moved up there, and that's where it all started.

## How did you enjoy modelling?

It was awesome and scary and fun and everything you imagine it would be. I lived and worked in all the big markets: New York, London, Paris and LA. But coming from middle America, having to be sample size [a UK 8-10] was always going to be a challenge... you know what American portion sizes are like! So that's when I became really serious about fitness. I'd played sports from a young age, but I didn't have three hours spare to play sports anymore, and I needed something more efficient.

## ABOUT BOOM! CYCLE

The first Boom! Cycle site in Shoreditch, London, includes a studio with 39 bikes plus an instructor bike; male and female showers, changing rooms and lockers; and a reception area. A one-off class costs £14 (or £7 for the first class); a package of five sessions is £55 (£11 per class); a package of 10 is £100 (£10 per class); and a package of 20 is £180 (£9 per class). Around 60 per cent of users are women and 40 per cent men and the age range is 20-65.



Classes include the 30 minute Express Lunch class, Hip Hop Cycle, Latin Cycle and the Two Hour Ride

## What was your first experience of indoor cycling?

It was 2001, the year I moved to New York. I went to the Reebok Gym on the Upper East Side, saw this class and decided to check it out. I wasn't very good my first time, I didn't have the right shoes, but I felt like I was dancing on a bike; like I was in a nightclub! I had a lot of fun and the time passed very quickly. I also loved how efficient it was... I needed to be fit and this was the easiest way to get it done.

## When and where did you get the inspiration for Boom! Cycle?

When I first came to London for work in 2004. At that time there were only a few gyms offering indoor cycling, and the classes on offer weren't like the ones I was used to in the States; to begin with, the bikes didn't have any clips on their pedals. And the couple of good classes I did manage to find

weren't convenient to get to. I remember thinking, 'This is crazy – I should start my own indoor cycling gym.' But at the time I was so busy with modelling there was no way I could stay in one place long enough to start a business.

## What made you change your mind?

Love! I decided to stay in the UK permanently when I met my boyfriend [the entrepreneur Robert Rowland, who is also Gilbert's business partner]. After making that decision I was like, 'OK, now I really might be able to sink my teeth into something'. So that's when I started looking into visas and gathering information for a business plan.

## How would you sum up the Boom! Cycle offer?

It's a very effective and entertaining indoor cycling workout, which we offer at great value for money with the



Boom! Cycle uses Schwinn AC Sport bikes



Heather Frankham and business partner Robert Rowland

**"We want to be a business that appeals to the masses, so we offer a range of classes from technical cycling to fun workouts"**

freedom of pay-per-class pricing. We want to be a business that appeals to the masses, so we offer a range of classes, from technical cycling to fun workouts, such as Latin Cycle, Disco Cycle and Hip Hop Cycle. We also offer something called Body Boom, which incorporates weights into the workout – that's one of our most popular classes.

**Why did you opt for a pay-per-session model?**

Because people don't want to be tied down; if they're travelling and can't go to the gym for a month, they don't want to pay for it. We also wanted to make it easier for people who already had a gym membership to supplement that rather than having to take out another.

**What sets Boom! Cycle apart?**

Other than the pay-per-session model, I think it's the fact that we concentrate on this one single activity and

put all our energy into doing it excellently – from the instruction to getting the lighting and room temperature right and making sure the speakers are facing the right way. We also really focus on tailoring the experience to the individual. For example, we've created a bespoke booking system, which allows each rider to choose exactly where they want to sit in the studio. We also hire out indoor cycling shoes for £1, so if someone doesn't want to buy specialist shoes or doesn't feel like bringing them they can still have the full experience.

**What kit do you use?**

That's another thing that sets us apart. We've got Schwinn AC Sport bikes, which only one other gym in central London has. Loads of our clients have told us that they're the best indoor cycling bikes they've ever been on and the most like a road

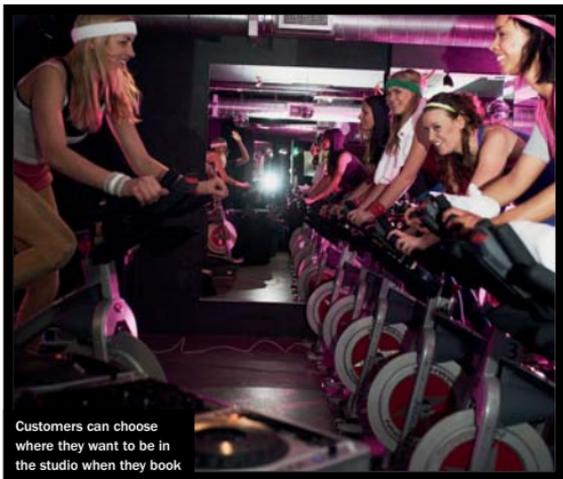
bike. But the coolest thing about them is that while the resistance on most indoor bikes comes from brake pads, these bikes use magnets, which don't wear down as easily. We also have Schwinn's MPower consoles, which allow the rider to monitor things like cadence [the speed at which the pedals are turning], heart rate and lap time. If people are really serious, they can record the workout on a USB stick, put it into their computer and look at the readings in an Excel spreadsheet.

**The Shoreditch site opened on 17 October 2011. How challenging was it to get off the ground?**

It was tough at times, but we just decided we were going to do whatever it took. There were a few things that went wrong with the build, and getting the word out in the first few months was also quite tricky, as we're a destination location – we're not on a high



Creative agency The Outdoor Collective, which specialises in street art, created graffiti murals for the gym



Customers can choose where they want to be in the studio when they book

"We wanted to create the look of an old inner-city boxing gym - a place where people go to work out and where there's a sense of camaraderie"

street, so not that many people walk by. But we have an awesome PR company that got us really good press in pretty much every publication we could have wanted, and we did things like Groupon and Living Social to raise awareness. The hardest thing was probably our whole lives being flipped upside down; every day through the build and the launch we would be here from 6am until 1 or 2 in the morning.

#### How did you decide on the design?

The interior was realised by the architect Thomas Rowland of Tomorrow Land. We wanted to create the look of an old inner-city boxing gym: a place where people go to work out and where there's a sense of camaraderie. We also worked with a really cool group of local artists called the Outside Collective, who did our graffiti murals.

#### Where did you find your instructors?

I asked around, and anyone I heard was good I went to see. I acted like I wanted to join every gym in the city, just so I could get in and take people's classes! We have professional cyclists and international fitness presenters... our instructors are awesome.

#### How much has been invested and how did you raise the money?

Total investment for the Shoreditch site was upwards of £130,000, which we raised through friends and associates. There are four other investors as well as Robert and myself.

#### What have been the highest and lowest points?

The lowest point was probably coming back in January after our first December, which is a low point for every health club, and thinking, 'Oh dear God, I hope it doesn't stay like this!' The highest point was also in January, after we had two pieces of press come out in *Stylist* magazine and *Vogue*. After that the phone wouldn't stop ringing and our classes were sold out for the first time.

#### What are your ambitions for the business?

We want to continue to grow the studio and get as many classes on the schedule and as many great clients as we can, then the next goal is to get a second studio open; we're not sure exactly where yet, but it will be somewhere in London. Longer term, we want to roll out this little slice of

fitness heaven to all the major cities in the UK and possibly move into Europe - but that's going to be years away!

#### Who do you admire in business and why?

My boyfriend and business partner Robert Rowland - he's on a never-ending quest for knowledge. And our friend Scott Ruddman, the founder of venture capital firm Nectar Capital, who has been helping us, and who is also an investor in the business.

#### Who do you do in your leisure time?

As well as indoor cycling I also do a bit of running and have signed up for a few races this year. I also like restaurants with really good food, enjoying wine, watching films, sleeping...

#### What's your favourite book and film?

My favourite film is *American Beauty*. My favourite book is *The Count of Monte Cristo* - I just love the story!

#### How would you describe your philosophy on life?

When in doubt, go for it anyway - don't let fear hold you back. ●



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# PAVILION IN THE PARK

In honour of the London 2012 Olympic Games, the design team responsible for the Bird's Nest stadium at the 2008 Beijing Olympics have been reunited to create the new Serpentine Pavilion. We take a look

HERZOG & DE MEURON AND AI WEIWEI © 2012 IAN BAAN



The Pavilion's interior is clad in cork, which was chosen for its sustainable properties

## ABOUT THE PAVILION

Each year the Serpentine Gallery commissions a different architect to design its temporary pavilion. In honour of the 2012 Olympics, the Beijing National Stadium-designers Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei were asked to design this year's structure.

This year's Serpentine Pavilion is a sunken structure which takes visitors "beneath the Serpentine's lawn to explore the hidden history of the previous pavilions." It features 12 columns – one for each pavilion over the 12 years the Serpentine has been running the architectural programme – and an elevated platform roof, which collects rainwater but can also be drained in order to host dance performances.



Julia Peyton-Jones OBE

## Serpentine Gallery Julia Peyton-Jones, Co-director

"It has been a great honour to work with Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei, the design team behind Beijing's superb Bird's Nest Stadium.

In this exciting year for London we are proud to be creating a connection between the Beijing 2008 and the London 2012 Games.

We are enormously grateful for the help of everyone involved, especially Usha and Lakshmi N Mittal, whose incredible support has made this project possible."

[The steel magnate Lakshmi N Mittal and his wife are lead supporters of the 2012 Serpentine Pavilion. It will enter their private collection once it has closed to the public in October.]

## The design team Herzog and De Meuron and Ai Weiwei

"Every year since 2000, a different architect has been responsible for creating the Serpentine Gallery's Summer Pavilion. So many pavilions in so many different shapes and out of so many different materials have been conceived and built that we instinctively tried to sidestep the problem of creating an object, a concrete shape.

Our path to an alternative solution involved digging down five feet into the soil of the park until we reach the groundwater. There we [created] a kind of well to collect all of the London rain that falls in the area of the Pavilion.

As we dig down into the earth to reach the groundwater, we encounter a diversity of constructed realities such as telephone cables, remains of former foundations or backfills. Like a team of archaeologists, we identify these phys-



Jacques Herzog (left) and Pierre de Meuron

HERZOG & DE MEURON © 2011, MARCO GROSS



Chinese artist Ai Weiwei

© AI WEIWEI

**"The roof floats a few feet above the grass of the park, so that everyone can see the water on it, its surface reflecting the infinitely-varied, atmospheric skies of London"**

ical fragments as remains of the 11 pavilions between 2000 and 2011.

On the foundations of each single pavilion, we extrude a new structure as load-bearing elements for the roof of our Pavilion. The roof floats a few feet above the grass of the park, so

that everyone visiting can see the water on it, its surface reflecting the infinitely varied, atmospheric skies of London. For special events, the water can be drained off the roof as from a bathtub, from whence it flows back into the waterhole."



Cork-covered stools provide seating for visitors to the Pavilion

HERZOG & DE MEURON AND AI WEIWEI © 2012 LIUKE HAYES



The changing sky is reflected in the water-filled elevated roof

HERZOG & DE MEURON AND AI WEIWEI © 2012 JOHN OFFENBACH



ESPA creates spa design and skincare products

**"Great architecture and design can enrich lives and act as a creative springboard for new thinking"**

## ESPA, Pavilion sponsor Susan Harmsworth MBE, CEO, ESPA

"ESPA shares a common ethos with the Serpentine Gallery; that great architecture and design can enrich lives and act as a creative springboard for new thinking and ideas.

This year's Pavilion concept is no exception. The vision of the design team of Herzog & de Meuron in collaboration with Ai Weiwei and their archaeological approach "to inspire visitors to look beneath the surface as well as back in time," perfectly reflects ESPA's rich heritage in designing

iconic spa environments and creating beautifully effective natural products.

ESPA's philosophy is all about striving for natural elegance in everything we do. We combine the design and management of prestigious spas across five continents with the creation of pioneering, natural products. The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion is an appropriate reflection of the brand's pioneering commitment over two decades to our core brand values.

ESPA will be celebrating its British heritage throughout 2012 by embarking on a series of collaborations with British cultural institutions, artists and luminaries that showcase the best in design and expertise." ●



# OLYMPIC GOLD

After seven years of waiting, the 2012 Olympics Games are finally here. We take a look at the main venues where all the action is taking place



## OLYMPIC STADIUM

### OPENING & CLOSING CEREMONIES

### ATHLETICS

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** Designed by Populous with legacy in mind, the Olympic Stadium's 80,000 capacity can be reduced after the Games. It has a permanent lower tier with a capacity of 25,000, and a temporary steel and concrete upper tier, which holds a further 55,000 spectators, that can be dismantled after the Games.

The temporary upper tier means that amenities such as catering and toilets have been designed as individual pods, located in temporary facilities around the outside of the stadium.

**AFTER THE GAMES:** The London Legacy Development Corporation and Mayor of London Boris Johnson have taken the decision to keep the Olympic Stadium under public ownership once the Games are over.

Its design is flexible enough to accommodate a number of different requirements and capacities. It will retain athletics at its core, and will also be a venue for a range of other sporting, cultural and community events – including the 2015 IAAF World Championships.



▲ The top tier of the Stadium was built using surplus gas pipes. This upper tier can be dismantled after the Games



▲ The Aquatics Centre features two 50m pools and a 25m pool



▲ More than 180,000 tiles were used in the pools

## AQUATICS CENTRE

### DIVING

### SWIMMING (OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC)

### MODERN PENTATHLON

### SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

Ⓞ **DESIGN AND BUILD:** Designed by Zaha Hadid, the Aquatics Centre's wave-like roof, clad with 30,000 individual sections of red lauro hardwood from Brazil, proved to be one of the most complex engineering challenges of the Olympic Park big build. Its skeletal structure rests on just two concrete supports at the northern end of the building and

supporting wall at its southern end.

The venue features a 50m competition pool, a 25m competition diving pool, a 50m warm-up pool and a 'dry' warm-up area for divers. It has a seating capacity of 17,500,

Ⓞ **AFTER THE GAMES:** The Aquatics Centre will be transformed into a facility for the local community, clubs and schools, as well as elite swimmers – attracting an anticipated 800,000 visitors a year.

The pools have moveable booms and floors to create different pool sizes. The two temporary wings will be removed – reducing capacity to 2,500 – although it will be possible to increase the capacity for competitions. It will also feature a crèche, a café and a new public plaza. The venue's operator after the Games will be Greenwich Leisure Limited.



▲ Hopkins worked with a design panel that included Olympic gold medalist Sir Chris Hoy

## VELODROME

### CYCLING – TRACK (OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC)

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** The Hopkins-designed Velodrome is one of the most sustainable venues of the London 2012 Games.

Sustainable choices have been made wherever possible; from the sourcing of wood used on the track

and external cladding to the installation of a 100 per cent naturally ventilated system that eliminates the need for air conditioning. Wherever possible, the materials used in the venue's construction were sustainably sourced, including the 5,000sq m of western red cedar used to clad its exterior.

The Velodrome has capacity for 6,000 spectators, with the seating split into two tiers. A glass wall around the venue's perimeter between the lower and upper tiers of the ven-

ue's seating will give spectators a 360-degree view of the Olympic Park.

**AFTER THE GAMES:** After the Olympics, the venue will be handed over to the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and form the heart of a new VeloPark for use by the local community, clubs and elite athletes.

The VeloPark will also include the reconfigured BMX track, a new mountain bike track and a road cycle circuit, plus a café and bike hire facilities.



▲ The BMX track was designed and approved by the UCI

## BMX TRACK

### CYCLING – BMX

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** This challenging course features an 8m-high ramp at the start, followed by jumps, bumps and tightly banked corners.

Around 14,000cubic metres of soil were used to build the track, which was excavated elsewhere on the Olympic Park site, cleaned then reused to create a series of levels up to 4m high, on which the final track was formed.

**AFTER THE GAMES:** The temporary seating will be removed and the track reconfigured to make it suitable for riders of all ages and abilities.



▲ The Riverbank Arena was designed by Populous

## TEMPORARY RIVERBANK ARENA

### HOCKEY

This temporary arena has two pitches, one with spectator seating and one for use as a warm-up area.

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** London 2012 is the first Olympics where the hockey pitches aren't green. Pink is used for the area surrounding the pitch and blue for the field of play – making it easy to spot the yellow ball.

The first Riverbank Arena pitch was unveiled in October 2011. The surrounding structures were built at the beginning of 2012, ready for the hockey test event in May 2012.

**AFTER THE GAMES:** The pitches at the Riverbank Arena will move to the north of the Olympic Park, joining the group of permanent facilities at Eton Manor. It will have 3,000 permanent seats with the ability to increase to up to 15,000 for major events.

## COPPER BOX

### HANDBALL

### MODERN PENTATHLON

This iconic venue, designed by MAKE architects, is extremely flexible, with retractable seating that can change the floor size, facilitating different activities during and after the Games.

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** The venue was designed and built with sustainability as a priority. Among its many innovative features, the roof is fitted with 88 light pipes that allow natural light into the venue, reducing the demand for electric lights – achieving annual energy savings of up to 40 per cent. Rainwater collected from the venue's roof will be used to flush toilets and reduce water use at the venue by up to 40 per cent.

The top half of the venue is clad in copper – mostly recycled – to give it a



▲ Post-Games, the venue will seat up to 6,000 spectators

unique appearance that will develop a rich natural colour as it ages.

**AFTER THE GAMES:** The Copper Box will be operated by Greenwich Leisure Limited and will become a multi-use sports centre.

Its flexible design and retractable seating will allow for activities rang-

ing from international competitions to community sports, and for a wide range of indoor sports, including basketball, handball, badminton, boxing, martial arts, netball, table tennis, wheelchair rugby and volleyball.

A health and fitness club with changing facilities and a café for use by the local community are also planned.



▲ The centre reopens to the public after the Games on 8 September

## LEE VALLEY WHITewater CENTRE

### CANOE SLALOM

The Lee Valley White Water Centre is located 30km north of the Olympic Park, on the edge of the 1,000-acre River Lee Country Park – part of the Lee Valley Regional Park.

The centre has two separate courses: a 300m Olympic-standard competition course with a 5.5m descent, and a 160m intermediate/training course with a 1.6m descent.

🕒 **DESIGN AND BUILD:** The centre was designed by FaulknerBrowns Architects, and the courses by Whitewater Parks International. Landscape design was by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

🕒 **AFTER THE GAMES:** The two courses and facilities building will remain, with the venue becoming a canoeing and kayaking facility for people of all abilities, and a leisure attraction for white water rafting.

After the Olympics, the venue will be owned and managed by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. It will also offer an extensive sports development programme, run in partnership with the British Canoe Union.



▲ The venue's exterior is covered in recyclable PVC fabric



▲ The Basketball Arena has a seating capacity of 12,000

## TEMPORARY BASKETBALL ARENA

### BASKETBALL

### HANDBALL FINALS

### WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

### WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

The new Basketball Arena is one of the largest temporary venues ever built for an Olympic Games event. It was created by a design consortium led by SKM together with Wilkinson Eyre and KSS.

It will be one of the most heavily-used Olympic venues, with events taking place almost every day.

🕒 **DESIGN AND BUILD:** The venue's frame is made up of 1,000 tonnes of steel and is covered in 20,000sq m of a recyclable white PVC fabric that will form the canvas for spectacular lighting displays during the Games. On the inside, the venue features black and orange seats representing the colours of a basketball.

Behind the scenes, the Arena shares some facilities with the Velodrome and BMX Track to optimise space and resources. These include two courts in temporary accommodation and areas for catering, security, waste management and the media.

🕒 **AFTER THE GAMES:** The Basketball Arena will be taken down and parts of it are expected to be reused elsewhere.

## WEYMOUTH AND PORTSMOUTH

### SAILING

Located on the south coast, Weymouth and Portland provides some of the best natural sailing waters in the UK, with facilities on land to match.

**DESIGN AND BUILD:** The site already had world-class sailing facilities, but enhancements were needed to ensure the venue was suitable for the Olympic Sailing competition.

The improvements to the existing National Sailing Academy (WPNSA) included a permanent 250m slipway used for launching and landing boats and 70 new moorings.

A new commercial 560-berth marina has also been built near the Academy and 250 of these berths will be used during the Olympic Games.

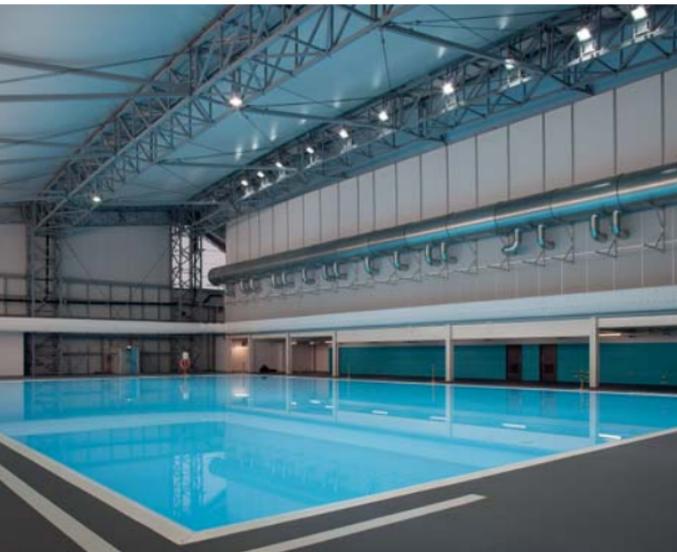
The enhancement project was finished more than three years before the Games. It was the first Olympic sporting venue to be completed.



▲ The WPNSA has already started a community programme

**AFTER THE GAMES:** The National Sailing Academy will benefit from the improved facilities, providing a state-of-the-art facility for elite training, competition and community use.

The venue has already hosted the Olympic Windsurfing discipline, RS:X class World Championship in 2009, and the IFDS (Paralympic Sailing) World Championship in 2011.



▲ The construction of the venue was completed in April 2012

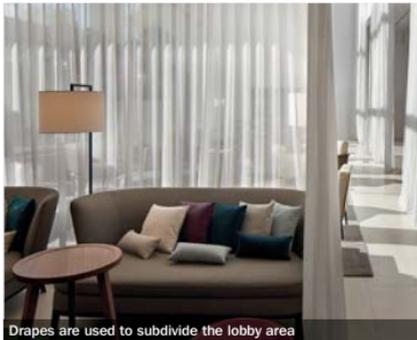
## WATER POLO ARENA

### WATER POLO

This temporary venue, designed by David Morley Architects, was built in just 13 months. The Water Polo Arena is easily distinguishable by its silver-coloured wrap and an inflatable roof, made from recyclable plastic. It holds almost three million litres of water in the warm-up and competition pools.

The building will stage the men's and women's water polo competition during the Games. Afterwards, the venue will be taken down, with elements reused elsewhere.

The venue is based at the main eastern entrance to the Olympic Park next to the Aquatics Centre, in one of the most compact areas of the 500-acre site. To make the best use of space, the two buildings share a number of back of house facilities. ●



PHOTOS OF THE HILTON BARCELONA: FREGUENANTE

Drapes are used to subdivide the lobby area

## MATTEO THUN

The Italian architect and interior designer tells Magali Robathan about the challenges of creating a new look for the Hilton Barcelona, and explains the thinking behind the Ecotecture movement



The space is flooded with natural light

### How did your career in architecture begin?

Originally, I wanted to be a doctor – but then I had the opportunity to study under [Austrian expressionist artist and draughtsman] Oskar Kokoschka at the Salzburg Academy in Austria. He taught me to really 'see'. Afterwards, I moved to Florence and studied architecture under the Italian architect Adolfo Natalini. I later met the Italian architect and designer Ettore Sottsass, and we founded the Memphis Group in Milan in 1981. [The Memphis Group comprised a group of designers that created Post Modern furniture and design objects between 1981 and 1987.] I opened my own office in Milan in 1984.

Following the principle of the Milan school, we always worked in interior design and architecture at the same time – approaching projects from a holistic standpoint.

### At what point did you start to make a name for yourself?

In 1993 we created the first low-energy, sustainable prefab housing system in wood. Ever since, this has been what has driven me.

### Where do you get the inspiration for your designs?

I travel a lot, and I meet loads of different, interesting people, I love art and visit exhibitions as much as I can. I spend my weekends surrounded by nature – always the best energiser.

### Where do you work on your designs?

I am a visual person – so wherever I am, I draw in my black notebook.

### What did the Hilton Barcelona look like before the refurbishment?

It was just looking old. The Hilton Barcelona, which was one of the city's first branded hotels, was built for the Barcelona Olympic Games 20 years ago – it needed a fresh look. Hilton approached us to help.

### What was your brief for the public areas?

The hotel has an iconic lobby entrance with an abundance of natural light within the atrium.

Hilton asked us to give the space more lightness, to create something more open and inviting.

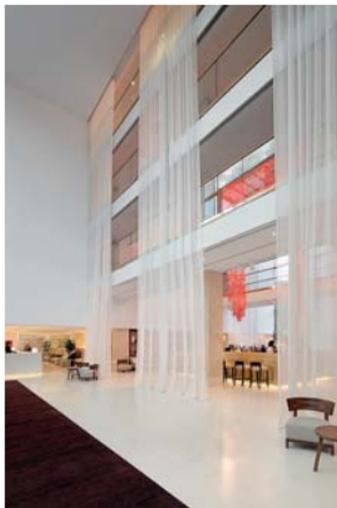
### What were you trying to create with your design?

We wanted to create a unique, modern and edgy lobby space that fulfils the needs of the guests and that will last effectively in the long term. We wanted to design a meeting point and create an atmosphere that is about both entertainment and business. I think this is key for a city hotel of today – especially in Barcelona, one of the most exciting cities in Europe.

### How would you describe the interior design?

The design concept offers extreme flexibility, allowing the structures and the furnishings in the public areas of the hotel to change in keeping with different hospitality requirements. The result is a fluid design that provides the guest with a maximum of service, function and comfort.

All these elements are given by the existing architecture of the hotel. The lobby is full of daylight. This is why we wanted to create a huge white space that, when separated through flexible translucent drapes, can also be divided into several private zones.



The red ceiling sculpture by Jacopo Foggini creates a dramatic contrast to the all-white interior

### What part of the design are you most proud of?

I love entering the hotel lobby in the early morning, when daylight is flooding the 15m-high space.

### You are an advocate of Ecotecture. What does this mean?

I want to create long-lasting projects that grow old nicely. Of course this means that we have to respect the environment. We follow the philosophy of the three zeros: Zero CO2 (CO2-neutral energy production and construction), Zero km (reduced transport routes through prefabrication and local materials) and Zero Waste (recycling of used materials).

### Why is it so important to ensure that architecture is sustainable?

Sustainable construction involves aesthetic, economic and technological durability. This means avoiding architectural wounds and using the right materials in the right place, finding the right configuration of the building volume. It means respecting the soul of every place you work on.

The solution is different each time. ●

## THE HILTON BARCELONA

The refurbished Hilton Barcelona opened at the beginning of June, featuring 289 rooms, 13 suites, the Mosaic restaurant, a fitness centre, The Vibe Bar and an outdoor terrace.

Matteo Thun and Partners were responsible for all of the public areas, including the multi-functional lobby space. The all-white lobby has been designed to be flexible so that it can be adapted for a range of events from business meetings to art exhibitions. It features a central bar that can be subdivided with translucent drapes and

which features a dramatic sculpture by Milan based artist, Jacopo Foggini.

The Hilton Barcelona is the first Hilton property to be refurbished according to Hilton's new lobby design guidelines, which are based on the idea that mobile technology means that guests increasingly want to spend time in hotel lobbies. The vision for Hilton's new lobbies is that they should be multiple use spaces incorporate striking design, access to technology and contemporary food and beverage offerings.



PHOTO: BEPE RAZO

PHOTO: VIGLIUS MOUNTAIN RESORT

## OTHER PROJECTS

Matteo Thun designed the Vigilius Mountain Resort in Italy (left, see *Spa Business* Issue 4, 2006, p82) and Hotel Missoni, Edinburgh (far left)

# BRUCE POON TIP

The founder of Canada's biggest adventure travel company talks to Magali Robathan about sustainable tourism, the rise of social media and meeting the Dalai Lama



Bruce Poon Tip, founder and CEO of G Adventures

When I interview Bruce Poon Tip, founder of Canadian adventure travel company G Adventures, he has just fulfilled a lifetime's ambition. He has come back from two days spent travelling with the Dalai Lama, who Poon Tip says has been a huge inspiration and who has shaped the way he has run his business over the past 22 years.

"[The trip] was one of the highlights of my life," says Poon Tip. "I got a better understanding of my own purpose, and confirmation of all the things we're doing at G Adventures. It was inspiring hearing the Dalai Lama talk about business and his thoughts on happiness and sustainability and his united view of religions and people. It's exactly how I feel, and I've tried to incorporate those views into my business."

The Dalai Lama was in Canada for a convention of world parliamentarians on Tibet, and Poon Tip was part of an entourage that included Harrison Ford who travelled with the Tibetan spiritual leader. Proudly, Poon Tip tells me that the Dalai Lama signed a book for him, and thanked him for his dedication to responsible travel.

For Poon Tip, having a business that is socially and environmentally responsible is as important as having one



G Adventures aims to take travellers off the beaten track and get them in touch with local communities

that is successful. G Adventures (formerly Gap Adventures) has won a wide range of awards for its dedication to ethical business practices and sustainable tourism including the Corporate Award for Environmental Excellence, the Ethics in Action Millennium Award, *Condé Nast Traveller's* World Saver Award and Tanzania Tourist Board's Humanitarian Award. Earlier this year, the non-profit membership organisation Social Venture Network inducted Poon Tip into its hall of fame, something which he describes as one of the high points of his career.

"Our business model isn't about bottom-lines and turnover. It's about happiness, freedom and independence," says Poon Tip. "We celebrate individuality, champion diversity and inspire innovation."

This commitment to doing the right thing doesn't seem to have done G Adventures any harm. Today it is Canada's largest adventure travel company, with an annual revenue of around \$150m, offering small group

"Mainstream tour operators offered travel within a westernised bubble. The original focus of Gap Adventures was to get the traveller in touch with local people"

travel experiences to more than 100,000 people a year. The company is continuing to grow during the economic downturn, and January and February saw G Adventures post its highest ever sales figures, with passenger numbers up 19 per cent and revenue up 22 per cent.

#### EARLY DAYS

Poon Tip set up Gap Adventures back in 1990, when he was just 23. As a keen traveller, he could see there was room in the market for an alternative to what was on offer.

"It was a very different time back then," he says. "If you didn't want to go on a cruise, or a coach tour or to a resort, you'd go backpacking – there wasn't really anything in between. I did a lot of travelling, and when I went backpacking I saw lots of young, professional people with disposable incomes that wanted the kind

of cultural experience you get from backpacking but in the form of a more organised and comfortable holiday."

Unable to secure a loan from the banks, Poon Tip used his own personal credit cards to launch Gap Adventures, so called because it aimed to bridge the gap between the mainstream traveller and the backpacker. The main focus, he says, was on getting people in touch with the countries they were travelling in.

"Mainstream tour operators offered travel within a westernised bubble – air-conditioned coaches, Best Western hotels," he says. "Outside of very brief moments when you might pull up outside a craft market, you hardly saw local people. Tourists were experiencing countries at arm's length. The original focus of Gap Adventures was to get the traveller in touch with local people, and help them see the country through the locals' eyes."

G Adventures offers a range of small-ship cruises aboard the 126-passenger M/S Expedition, which it bought in 2009

## THE OFFER

G Adventures (the company changed its name in 2011 following a copyright infringement ruling in a suit brought by the retailer Gap Inc) offers small group adventure tours in Asia, Africa, North America, Europe, Central America and Antarctica. The tours are organised into different 'styles' to help travellers pick – these include Active tours, Family Tours, Voluntours (which include an element of voluntary work) and Limited Edition tours, which feature trips that take in one-off events such as cultural festivals and carnivals.

The tours all use local transportation – which can range from buses and trains to rickshaws and camels – and 'authentic' accommodation to try and bring the traveller closer to the communities they are travelling in. Keeping group sizes small is also



important, says Poon Tip, with an average group size of 10, and a maximum of around 16 on any trip.

The company also owns the cruise ship M/S Expedition and offers cruises to locations including the Arctic, Antarctica, the Amazon and Greenland.

Earlier this year, G Adventures launched its Local Living programme. "It's a new brand that gives people the

chance to stay in a farmhouse in Italy, or live with a local family in Chile. It gives people a different experience," says Poon Tip.

G Adventures has also teamed up with the Discovery Channel to create Discovery Adventures, offering 31 Discovery Channel-inspired trips to 18 destinations. "It's a very big programme with more elements of

## IN HIS OWN WORDS

Poon Tip on who he admires and what makes him tick



### Who do you admire in business?

I like great leaders. Apple co-founder Steve Jobs was a fantastic innovator. I admire Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu on the spiritual, motivational side. Richard Branson, who I've had a chance to meet, is a great leader and a great mind in terms of sustainable thinking.

### What do you do for fun, outside work?

Work is fun! Outside of work, I play a lot of sports. I also enjoy staying at home – I travel so much that my vacation is sitting in the garden. I have two children, aged eight and 10, and my passion is travelling with them, because they are still

amazed by everything. I took them to Peru in March. I've probably been to Peru 50 times in the last 20 years – we have 300 employees there – but going with my kids is a totally different experience, as they have new eyes for everything.

### What is your philosophy on life?

As far as I'm concerned our whole purpose in life is to create happiness and to be happy. Happiness is free, for everybody, if you want it; you just have to create an environment where you can achieve it.

At G Adventures, our whole business model is centred around creating happiness, and that goes for anyone who touches

our brand – our employees, our travellers, our travel agents.

### What has been the highlight of your career?

There have been so many highs. This year the Social Venture Institute inducted me into its hall of fame – I was pretty excited about that. Two years ago *National Geographic* compiled a list of the best adventure travel companies on earth and we were number one. That was pretty nice. We always tell people how great we are, but it's nice when other people say it too.

We have also achieved a lot of milestones with the Planeterra Foundation, which has been a real high for everyone.



PHOTO © ATTIT PATEL

learning on it and specialist guides creating trips around the Discovery Channel programme's content," says Poon Tip. "When the Discovery Channel did *Frozen Planet* and *Planet Earth* we did trips around those themes, for example. It's been a really successful relationship for us."

## PLANETERRA

From the very start, it was important to operate in an ethical and sustainable way, says Poon Tip. "From day one it was always about people for us, about cultures meeting cultures. It always made sense for us to have an intimate relationship with our hosts. It's about doing the right thing, which is one of our core values."

"First of all it was about creating jobs and benefiting local economies, but we became very successful in the process. There came a tipping point when we knew we had to do something more than just giving people jobs. It made sense to go that next step. There comes a point when you have to really get serious and incorporate doing the right thing into the entire philosophy of your business."

In 1996, G Adventures started to partner with other non-profit organisations in order to give back to the communities in which it operated. Poon Tip soon became frustrated with the bureaucratic nature of the NGOs they were working with though. "Because we were so entrepreneurial and quick to market with our ideas, we felt the



"There comes a point when you have to really get serious and incorporate doing the right thing into the entire philosophy of your business"

non-profit organisations were really slowing us down," he says. The answer, he decided, was to go it alone, and in 2003 G Adventures set up the non profit Planeterra Foundation, dedicated to the development and support of small communities around the world.

Planeterra's is currently running more than 50 projects, spanning health, education, employment skills training, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental conservation.

"From the beginning I thought Planeterra would end up being bigger

G Adventures operates in six continents, offering a wide range of trip styles

than G Adventures, because there is so much potential there, and I think that prediction is coming to fruition," says Poon Tip. "As an adventure travel operator, you're a niche operator. Giving back is more of a mainstream proposition, with the potential to appeal to more people."

As an example, Poon Tip cites an appeal that was launched during the Kenyan droughts several months ago to raise money to build water tanks for families travelling to refugee camps. "We raised \$50,000 in 24 hours with a single tweet," he says. "Then we raised another \$50,000 the week after. Suddenly, we're involved in disaster response, which was never on our agenda. We made \$100,000 in a few days, and that cost us nothing as a company. It shows how we can transcend our product and engage our customers beyond travel."

## TOUGH TIMES

It hasn't been all plain sailing, of course. Poon Tip says that 1996 and 1997 were his most difficult years, when rapid fluctuations in currencies around the world hit G Adventures hard. "We were selling in nine different currencies, making money, losing money depending on the currency – and then the price of fuel started to explode," he says.

At the same time, the rapid growth of the internet meant the consumer could suddenly research and book their own trips in a way they had never been able to before. "People were getting so much information, so fast, that we had to react really quickly. When you are selling experiences and your competitor is the independent traveller, it's a very different way of creating a value proposition. It was hard."

Did he ever think the company might go under? "Yes. Between 1996 and 1997 the company almost tipped over. It was a very tough time.

"At many points, companies like ours would have thought 'we can't survive if people can book services locally'. It forced us to work harder to create value for our customers, to offer them something they can't book locally. We had to create something that was beyond just a tour."

While the growth of the internet has created challenges, it has also provided new opportunities, and Poon Tip is particularly excited by the potential of social media. All G Adventures staff are given social media training, and



Small group sizes are key to the G Adventure offer

"Social media means we have a more intimate relationship with customers than we had before. It has forced us to be very nimble and constantly adapt"

are also given regular breaks to tweet, with their tweets all posted on the G Adventure website so that customers can see what the staff are saying about the company. "It's about complete transparency," he says.

"Social media means we have a more intimate relationship with customers than we had before – now we can engage with them, communicate with them and hear their needs. It's been a very interesting step and has forced us to be very nimble and constantly adapt to these changes."

The company is also using technology in other innovative ways, such as with the launch of its wireless app, the Untourist, which aims to encourage people to travel in ways that benefit local communities. "With the Untourist, we're giving out all of our information in terms of the restaurants we eat at, the hotels we stay at, the transport we use" says Poon Tip. "The whole concept of the Untourist is free information; our motto is: if you can't travel with us, travel like us.

"The Untourist has been really successful, and it's influencing the travel industry as a whole. For years it's been tour operators' well-guarded secret which hotels and restaurants they use. We're the first company to say that the hotels and restaurants and transportation we use are just a small part of what we do. All of those things are important to us, but it's not the magic of our programme."

Poon Tip is driven, he says, by people. "The people that work for my business, the people all over the world that touch our brand every day. The fact that we are breaking the cycle of poverty for thousands of people who are involved in executing our services. It's more of a calling than a job.

"That's a big responsibility and I don't take it lightly." ●

PHOTO © LEONARDO TAMBUKIR



The Planeterra Foundation supports a women's weaving co-operative in Peru

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PHOTOS OF THE CUTTY SARK: JIM STEPHENSON

**I**n June 1957, five years into her reign, a young Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the historic 19th century clipper the Cutty Sark as a visitor attraction to the public. Fifty-five years later, in her Diamond Jubilee year, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh (the ship's patron since 1951) returned in April to the vessel's permanent home in Greenwich to re-open her as a painstakingly-preserved yet thoroughly updated 21st century attraction (see *Attractions Management* Q2 p60).

While the original conservation project for the world's last surviving tea clipper first started in 2006, a huge fire that ripped through the vessel while work was in progress in 2007 (the exact cause of which has never been fully determined) was to change the course of the ship's recent history. Although the damage turned out to be less invasive than the dramatic news footage first led people to believe, the conservation project's original budget of £5m rocketed to £50m as

## SHIP SHAPE

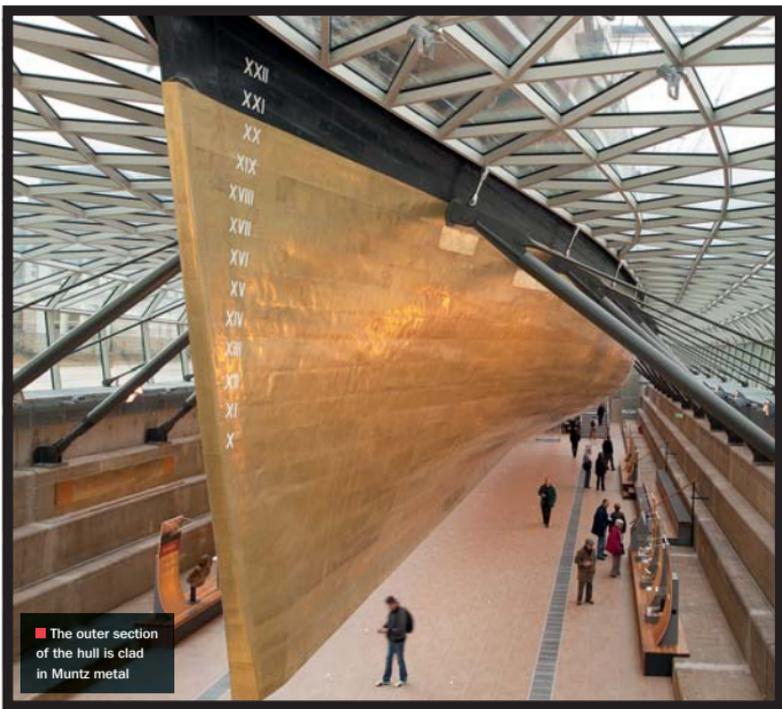
After a six-year conservation project that had to overcome the devastation of a major fire, the historic tea clipper Cutty Sark has risen from the ashes to become a visitor experience for the 21st century. Julie Cramer talks to some of the people who've helped

a more ambitious plan to preserve the Grade I-listed treasure had to be hatched. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided £25m, with the rest from local and central government, and as a result of fundraising efforts in the private sector worldwide.

In a bold feat of engineering, the 'new' Cutty Sark has now been raised 3.3 m in the air, creating an extensive glass canopy-covered basement where visitors can walk underneath her hull to view the unique design that allowed her to sail at a record-breaking speed of 17.5 knots (32km p/h). The solar-coated canopy meets the hull at

its highest water level – precisely where the Cutty Sark would have settled in the water when carrying its heaviest cargo.

The light-filled lower space also houses the ship's collection of 80 figureheads, a café and an events space. Meanwhile a range of interactive exhibits through the interior of the hull tell the story of the ship's journeys around the world, carrying cargo as diverse as fine teas, gunpowder, whisky and buffalo horns. The attraction sits within the newly-landscaped Cutty Sark Gardens, which provide a riverfront gateway to the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.



■ The outer section of the hull is clad in Muntz metal

## Richard Doughty

Director, Cutty Sark

**You've been on quite a voyage since first being appointed chief executive over a decade ago... I get a wry smile when I think about when I was appointed in 2001. The aspiration of the trustees was that this would be a £5m project at most. I joined wondering how I was going to raise £5m, and here we are £50m later.**

**How did you feel on the opening day?** Immensely proud. My worst moment was when the Queen waved to the 110 people manning the yards – who

all let go of the ropes and waved back! Otherwise it was a very special experience to be able to give Her Majesty and Prince Philip a personal tour.

**How would you personally sum up the importance of the Cutty Sark?** Cutty Sark is one of those rare things which is truly emblematic and inspiring. It's a piece of history that cannot be remade. The ship launched on the 25 April isn't a replica, it's the real ship. These are the frames and the wooden strakes that sailed to the south China seas and back.

**What can people expect from the new visitor experience?**

In the lower hold, the space is quite dark and atmospheric

– lights sash around the inside walls and visitors walk on and beneath tea chests. They go through a forest of screens projecting facts and films as they progress down through the ship.

Digital media really brings the personal stories to life. A magic mirror in the master salon shows the reflections of people who aren't here now, including a war merchant and a lady from the 1950s touching up her make up when the ship first opened in Greenwich.

**What aspect of the project makes you most proud?**

The fact that we've secured the future of Cutty Sark. The raised ship looks magnificent and our early feedback suggests that the light touch we've used in bringing the ship's stories to life are being very well received.

After the first month of trading almost 50,000 people have visited. The overwhelming response has been very positive. Above all people are



**"The dry berth structure built after World War II turned out not to have been built according to the official records of its construction"**

spellbound when they enter the dry berth and see the suspended ship.

**Why did the costs rise so much?**

There were many unforeseen factors. For instance, when we removed the concrete in the ship's bilges, the wrought iron frames were so badly corroded that we had to add steel to the ship to be able to put it back together again. That was an unexpected blow.

We also had huge problems in the ground – the dry berth structure built just after World War II turned out not to have been built according to the official records of its construction. We had to grout the entire structure, rebuild the foundations and recast the entire top of the dry berth. All those things added hugely to our costs and created significant delays.

**What are your aims for the Cutty Sark over the next year or two?**

Our initial aim is to achieve our business objectives and ensure the ship is properly maintained and reserves are built up to safeguard her future. The Trust will also be looking at ways to enhance the interpretation offer through a rolling programme of improvement works and the development of diverse learning and family activities. We'll continue to work closely with our patrons and trading partners. It is also conceivable the Trust will undertake further capital works to augment facilities.

Royal Museums Greenwich has taken over operational responsibility, although ownership of Cutty Sark remains with the Trust. All establishment staff have transferred to Royal Museums Greenwich including myself, where I'll sit on the Museums Executive Board with directorial responsibility for Cutty Sark.

■ Visitors can explore the hold where cargo was stored



**Chris Nash**

Partner,  
Grimshaw



**How and when did you get involved with the restoration of the Cutty Sark?**

We got involved in the project in 2004.

Note that it's a conservation project – the task was to halt the decline of the historic original fabric of the Cutty Sark, rather than restore her to original condition – an important distinction.

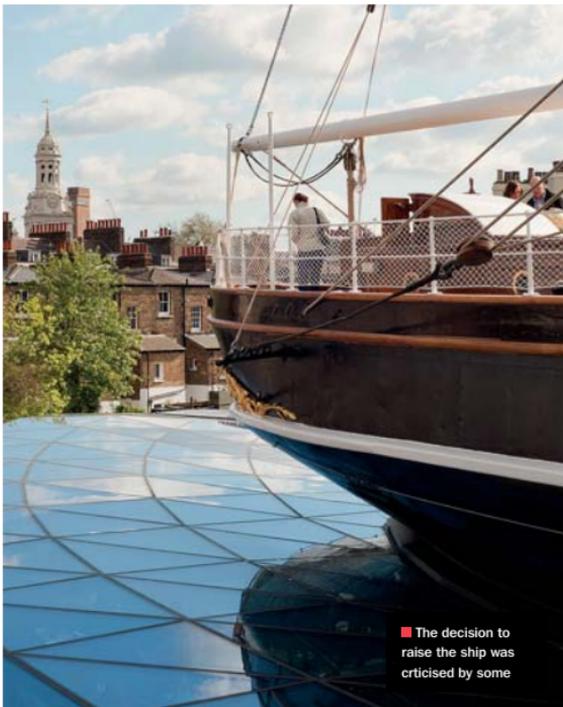
The Cutty Sark Trust wrote to us out of the blue, having recognised other exciting public projects we've been architects for, such as the Eden Project in Cornwall. While we had no previous experience of conservation of a historic ship – these projects are

rare anyway, the singular recent examples are SS Great Britain in Bristol, and Mary Rose in Portsmouth – we have worked with Grade 1-listed historic buildings before.

**Why do you think you were chosen, and what attracted you to the project?**

The Cutty Sark project required a good application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in a competitive field for grants, and it was recognised by the Cutty Sark Trust that our experience and reputation could help with this.

It also helped immensely to find an immediate rapport between the client, Richard Doughty, and myself. I have a great enthusiasm for sailing ships and for London, and I personally wanted to do this project very much.



■ The decision to raise the ship was criticised by some

#### What was your vision for the project?

In 2004 the Cutty Sark was in an advanced state of decay and about to be closed to the public as a dangerous structure. The Trust had very limited funds, paying visitor numbers had been in decline for years and the extent of the conservation work required to halt the decay was well beyond the resources available. The stark choice was to either scrap the ship or to come up with a scheme sufficiently attractive to support a business case for the investment required to conserve the ship for 50 years.

Our vision was to provide a modern, all-year visitor centre by exploiting the space beneath the ship in the dry berth and re-displaying the historic hull by elevating her to a new prominence. In other words, we proposed to lift the ship and allow visitors to view the hull in a unique and dramatic way. As far as we know, this is the first time this has been done in this way.

#### Do you have any maritime connections?

Like many, I can trace the maritime connections in my family – my grandfather was a Thames sailing barge carpenter from Greenwich. I also happen to be a keen sailor.

#### Raising the Cutty Sark within a dry berth was quite controversial. Why did you feel this was the right thing to do?

Lifting the ship seemed initially like a radical thing to do, but the more we researched it the more practical it was as a solution. The ship had been standing in the wet 'dry berth' decaying and distorting for more than 50 years on her keel and a randomly placed set of props. This is a temporary way of supporting a ship for maintenance, but in the long term is very unkind to a vessel designed to be evenly supported by the sea, and she was falling apart as a result.

Our proposal halted the decay by

careful treatment of the original iron frame and hull planking, by inserting some new steel frames to relieve the corroded originals, and a new steel skeleton which supports the original keel. Lifting the ship on the new skeleton supported the original structure in a way that simulates support by sea.

#### How did the fire damage in 2007 affect your work?

The project was delayed for about two years while the client and team regrouped, the project was re-examined for its sustainability and new sources of funding were pursued.

#### What is your favourite part of the restored ship?

It is an amazing and beautiful experience to walk beneath the ship's newly bright metal-clad hull; to reach up to touch the keel, realising that this beautiful form, weighing 960 tonnes, floats just above your head.

■ A range of interactive exhibits tell the story of the Cutty Sark



## Alessandra Canavesi

Cultural sponsorship manager, HSBC



**Why did HSBC decide to become the principal long-term sponsor of the Cutty Sark?**

HSBC was founded in Asia to finance trade with the West five years before the Cutty Sark first set sail in 1870. The Cutty Sark was a pioneer of global trade, bringing tea from China and wool from Australia to the UK.

Trade is still the biggest driver of economic and business growth. Our research suggests global trade will increase by over 85 per cent by 2026. So while the Cutty Sark is an emblem of past glories, it's also a reminder of the opportunities that global trade represents now and in the future.

**How will the partnership work?**

We'll support the Trust in its work to ensure as many members of the public

as possible visit, helping to bring to life the ship's history as a pioneer of global trade and its present as a first class visitor attraction. In addition to funding, we have also committed marketing spend to the partnership.

**How will HSBC benefit from the partnership?**

The partnership demonstrates HSBC's commitment to providing exclusive access to a leading UK cultural attraction for its clients and employees while also supporting the business' corporate social responsibility messaging through championing Cutty Sark's work within the local community.

HSBC is delighted to be able to support the ship's future, and excited to be able to use its unique events space for various hospitality opportunities.

**What activities have you been involved in so far?**

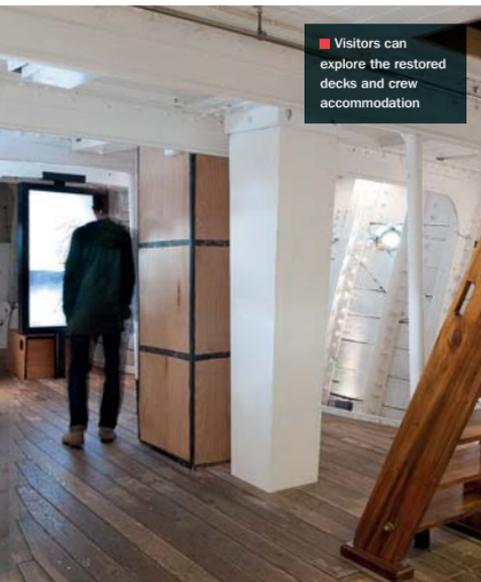
We wanted to bring some of the personal stories to life, so at the end of May we hosted 150 descendants of

the Cutty Sark, whom we tracked down with the help of a genealogist.

We found the only known living child of a crew member, Thomas Frank Dixon, aged 73, as well as the youngest descendant, a great great grandson of a crew member (born this May!). We traced descendants of the ship's designer Hercules Linton, of a war hero, of crewmen who were onboard for the Cutty Sark's 1885 record run from Sydney to London; and descendants of a crewman on board for the 1880 'Voyage from Hell'.

**Why do you feel that HSBC and the Cutty Sark make such good partners?**

The connections and parallels between us and Cutty Sark are many. We're connected through time – HSBC was founded about the same time Cutty Sark first sailed. We're connected through trade – Cutty Sark carried many of the commodities we traded in the past, in the present and – I hope – in the future. And we're connected through geography – the ports Cutty Sark is most associated with, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, London, were, are, and will be important gateways for us as a business. It's a great match.



■ Visitors can explore the restored decks and crew accommodation



■ The glass canopy around the ship creates a space to be used for events

## Bob Bewley

Director of operations,  
Heritage Lottery Fund



### When did you first become involved in the Cutty Sark project?

I have personally been involved since July 2007, but the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been involved since 2004.

### What were the main challenges with funding after the fire?

The key challenge was ascertaining the real impact of the fire in terms of costs, and ensuring these could be realistically assessed then dealt with. In addition the financial crisis meant that maintaining cost required all the partners in the project, the Cutty Sark Trust, HLF, the National Maritime Museum, DCMS, Royal Greenwich Borough Council and all the other funders, to work together so that the vision for the ship could be achieved.

### What criteria do you look for when you are deciding on funding?

On a project of this scale and importance we're looking for huge impact and a transformation in approach to our understanding of such an important part of the UK's heritage. There was no doubt that raising the ship almost 3m met those criteria, although this approach wasn't without its critics.

### What in your opinion are the real triumphs of the venture?

The reality matches the vision and the ship will be in a very good state of repair for at least another 50 years and we hope longer.

The Cutty Sark is already attracting huge interest as a place to visit and experience life on board an ocean-going sailing ship. Lord Sterling, one of the driving forces behind its success, is very keen that every visiting schoolchild is inspired and will remember the visit for the rest of their lives. I first visited Cutty Sark many years

ago, when I was 11, and although it wasn't 'in the air' it was still wonderful to go on the weather deck and imagine life on the open seas.

### How would you sum up the importance of the project to the UK's heritage?

The Cutty Sark is one of those enduring aspects of our past, which has a wonderful story to tell – not just of technological innovation but also of worldwide trade and the endeavours of all those who sailed on her.

As the fastest ship afloat in 1869 she has been described as the Concorde of her time and there are certainly important parallels.

### How would you describe the working relationship between the HLF and the Cutty Sark project team?

It was a very constructive, open, honest and therefore at times robust relationship. HLF attempted to be as co-operative as possible without either compromising the vision and aims of the project (as it is as much a conservation project as a capital works project) or increasing any risk for those funding it – especially the Lottery players' contributions. ●

IT'S GOT **AMBITIOUS BICYCLE PLANS**, **GYMS POWERED BY HUMAN ENERGY** AND **THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF LEED PLATINUM-CERTIFIED BUILDINGS IN AMERICA**. **MAGALI ROBATHAN FINDS OUT WHY PORTLAND, OREGON IS REGULARLY VOTED THE US'S GREENEST CITY**

# MODEL CITY

**K**nown for its rose gardens, its creative culture and its environmental awareness, Portland has long had a reputation as a city ahead of its time, and regularly tops polls for the greenest US city. From sustainable transport to town planning, green building to free bike initiatives, the city has been leading the way in terms of environmental policy for many years.

In 1971, Oregon introduced the first 'bottle bill' recycling programme in the US, in order to address the state's growing litter problem and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. In 1993, Portland became the first local government in the US to adopt a strategy to reduce carbon emissions, with

the introduction of its Global Warming Reduction Strategy. Carbon emissions are now 26 per cent lower per person than they were in 1990, in contrast with the trend elsewhere in the US.

In 2000, Portland City Council created an Office of Sustainable Development, and in 2009 was the first US city to merge its planning and sustainability departments to form the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

"I really wanted to change it so sustainability is the default of all policy, of all management, of all planning decisions," said Mayor Sam Adams of the decision to merge the two functions.

The bureau has saved more than \$18m in energy costs for the city by implementing a range of innovative

■ Portland, Oregon is situated at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers

measures including re-timing traffic lights to minimise the amount of time cars spend idling, saving more than 17 million gallons of gas a year.

## CYCLING PORTLAND

Thanks to its urban cycling efforts, Portland has long been seen as a bike-friendly city, and in 2010 it was voted the second best bicycling city in the world after Amsterdam by the League of American Bicyclists.

Portland's first bicycle plan was adopted in 1973, calling for the creation of almost 190 miles of bike infrastructure in the city. By 1996, this had been achieved, and the city adopted a new bicycle plan, which called for a further 445 miles of bicycle infrastructure to be built by 2016.

In 1994, Oregon activists Tom O'Keefe, Joe Keating and Steve Gunther launched The Yellow Bike Project, one of the US's first community bicycle programmes. It started with 10 old bikes, donated by Portland's Community Cycling Center, a local non-profit cycling centre. The bikes were repaired by trainee bike mechanics at the centre, painted yellow



■ The city has an active farmers' market scene, encouraging people to buy local produce





low and left around Portland for people to use, for free. The resulting press coverage saw the scheme grow as hundreds of people donated old bikes.

The Yellow Bike Project evolved into the Create a Commuter programme, which provides 375 free bikes a year to people on low incomes. The scheme, which is run by Portland's Community Cycling Center, provides 'fully-outfitted commuter bicycles to low-income adults striving to connect to work or workforce development by bicycle.' Participants are given a bicycle, lights, locks, pumps and tools and receive instruction on bicycle safety and commuting basics in a five hour workshop.

In 2010, Portland City Council voted unanimously to adopt the Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030, which supersedes the 1996 plan. It calls for more than a quarter of all trips to be made by bike by 2030, and recommends expanding the network of planned bikeways from 630 to 962 miles. It also aims to improve and preserve the existing bikeways, increase bicycle parking and encourage cycling by raising awareness and offering free maps and information to the public.



PHOTO: WWW.TRAVELPORTLAND.COM

Portland's bike network spans 630 miles and connects all parts of the city

### GREEN MUSEUMS

When the management at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) sat down to create the latest five year plan for the museum, they decided it was time to really make sustainability a key focus.

"OMSI has had a long-standing commitment to basing our activities on a 'triple bottom line' of environmental sustainability, financial strength, and social responsibility," says OMSI's energy and environment spokesperson Chris Stockner. "In the past, this approach has informed everything

from the museum's facility operations to its goals of educating visitors – but not in a comprehensive way."

The museum is visited by around one million people a year, so there was a real opportunity to help people understand critical issues for the planet.

"One of the primary goals we've set is to become a key educational resource on topics like sustainability, energy technology and earth systems science," says Stockner. "We've also set ourselves a goal to serve as a hub for the public to learn about sustainable solutions and the cutting edge research that's going on both in Oregon and beyond."

The museum's new Energy and Environment Initiative aims to offer a public platform for scientists working to create sustainable solutions and act

as a bridge between industry and public education.

A range of new exhibits and programmes are being introduced as part of this initiative. The museum's new Earth Lab, which launched in April, features fun, hands-on exhibits and demonstrations aimed at teaching visitors about core earth science concepts such as density, plate tectonics, renewable energy and ice cores.

The Sustainability Museum Exhibit will launch in September, aimed at encouraging visitors to think about how their personal choices can help create a healthier planet. An accompanying outreach programme will work to spread the message via mobile phone

**"I WANTED TO PROVIDE A LEGITIMATELY GREEN ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL FITNESS FACILITIES. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A CHALLENGE."**

*Adam Boesel, Green Microgym*

technology, events and transit signage.

A permanent, hands-on exhibit on renewable energy will launch in December 2012, focusing on the unique energy mix of the Pacific Northwest, including emerging technologies in solar, wind and wave energy. A related classroom outreach programme will allow students to design and test their own wind turbine and will look at how families can reduce energy consumption.

OMSI is also hoping to influence other museums to become more sustainable, and has developed a green exhibition checklist. This provides guidelines on how to use recycled, locally-sourced materials in exhibitions and how to offset the impact of carbon emissions from the energy used.

Other green measures include new chillers within the museum, which will reduce the museum's electricity use by around 20 per cent, the introduction of a comprehensive composting programme and the use of a rainwater management system which redirects rainwater into vegetation and soil rather than into the sewer system.

"Our most important successes are when people walk away from the museum or one of our programs with new knowledge or an expanded sense of possibilities," says Stockner. "Recently we had an event in connection with the Planet under Pressure conference. At the end of the day the museum was closed and we had kids still asking questions and doing the activities. They didn't want to leave."

### HARNESSING HUMAN POWER

The Green Microgym has three gyms, all in Portland. Energy-saving measures include the use of solar power, member-controlled lights and televisions which are only turned on when needed, treadmills that use 30 per



■ At Portland's Green Microgym, members generate electricity to power the gym as they work out.

PHOTO: BARBIE HULL



■ The Aloft Portland Airport was awarded Green Seal Certification in January 2011

cent less electricity than regular machines and compact fluorescent lighting. It's the energy-producing cardio equipment that makes it really unusual though – the gym's exercise machines are fitted with small generators, meaning that members' workouts generate electricity which is used to help power the televisions, stereos, lights and fans.

The company was established in 2007 by Adam Boesel, who wanted to see if the idea of creating electricity by exercising could be used in a mainstream gym setting. "I wanted to provide a legitimately green alternative to fitness facilities, which are traditionally not eco-friendly," says Boesel. "I also thought it would be a fun career and an interesting challenge."

In 2010, according to the company website, the Green Microgym generated 36 per cent of its own electricity by combining human and solar power, and saved 37,000 Kilowatt hours or 85 per cent (compared to traditional gyms per square foot). Typical gym

users generate between 50 – 150 watts of power during their workout.

Boesel admits that the energy produced by the exercise machines accounts for just a small percentage of the building's total energy needs, but says "the equipment is one part of a comprehensive system of doing everything as green as possible, understanding that 'green' is an aspiration as well as a destination." While, others have pointed out that the payback period on this type of equipment can be up to two or three times the lifespan of the average machine, Boesel is not worried.

"This isn't solar panels on the top of your house where you have to look at return on investment that way," he says. "This is altering exercise equipment to be more ecologically friendly. I would have had to buy it anyway for my gym, so for about the same price as new, I can purchase remanufactured equipment, and retrofit it with PlugOut technology and make the world a better place. It's an easy choice to make

if you have the right perspective."

Members also earn points by working out, which they can use to get money off products at local stores.

The gym uses PlugOut spin bikes, PlugOut Ellipticals and PlugOut Recumbent Bikes, all developed by Seattle-based company PlugOut Fitness, manufacturers and suppliers of electricity-producing cardio equipment (co-founded by Boesel).

## SUSTAINABLE HOTELS

In February, the Courtyard by Marriott in Portland's city centre became the first Gold LEED-certified hotel in the Pacific Northwest, and one of just 15 in the whole of the US. All of the hotel's electricity comes from renewable sources, 77 per cent of waste is composted or recycled and the hotel is reducing its carbon footprint by using 28 per cent less energy than is normally used in a building of its size.

The Aloft Portland Airport hotel has also won awards for its green efforts, which include its Bike and Fly pro-

**"PORTLANDERS NOW HAVE MORE LOW-CARBON OPTIONS TO GET TO SCHOOL AND WORK, MORE EFFICIENT WAYS TO HEAT AND POWER THEIR HOMES"**

*Mayor Sam Adams*

PHOTO: WWW.TRAVELPORTLAND.COM



■ Hopworks Urban Brewery is 100 per cent renewably powered

gramme – the hotel stores guests' bikes for up to 14 days for free, allowing travellers to cycle to the airport. Portland's DoubleTree Hotel, meanwhile, was the first Green Seal certified convention hotel in Oregon, and has a Green Meetings Specialist who can help business guests design a carbon neutral meeting. The Hotel Monaco Portland, part of Kimpton Hotels, is Green Seal Silver Certified and employs a range of green measures including recycling bins in guest rooms, printing on recycled paper with soy-based inks and using only environmentally-friendly cleaning products.

### BEER AND BIKES

The founders of Hopworks Urban Brewery and Hopworks BikeBar describe the bars as Portland's first 'Eco-Brewpubs'. Their mission is to provide "world-class beer and food as sustainably as possible," and their efforts to do so has seen them win numerous sustainability awards.

The Urban Brewery opened in March 2008, and features a 125-capacity restaurant and a 75-capacity bar serving 'hand-crafted' organic beers, while Hopworks second bar, Hopworks Bike Bar, opened in North Williams last summer. The second bar is on what Hopworks owner Christian Ettinger dubs the 'Williams bike highway' – 3,000 riders commute past the bar each day – and has been designed to appeal to cyclists, with 75 bike parking spaces, locally-made bicycles frames hanging above the bar, and the free loan of bike tools and bike locks.

Both bars are powered with 100 per cent renewable energy and all carbon emissions are offset. Other green measures include capturing rain-water for dry season irrigation and clean-

## PORTLAND'S CLIMATE ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

In April, the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Multnomah County Office of Sustainability released a two-year progress report for

Portland and Multnomah County's 2009 Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan is a three-year plan to put Portland on a path to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and an 80 per cent reduction by 2050.

According to the progress report, by the end of 2010 carbon emissions were 6 per cent below 1990 levels, while national carbon emissions were up almost 12 per cent over the same period.

"We're making solid progress on our ambitious Climate Action Plan goals, in part because we're creating a more connected city," said Portland Mayor Sam Adams. "Portlanders now have more low-carbon options to get to school and to work, more efficient ways to heat and power their homes and new ways to deal with household waste."

#### Other highlights from the report:

► Portland homes use 10 per cent less energy per person compared to 1990, and a larger percentage of the energy that is used now comes from sustainable energy sources.

ing, the use of low-flow toilets, sinks and dishwashers and energy efficient light bulbs, timers and sensors. All company vehicles are run on a mix of biodiesel and used fat fryer grease, the company has a zero percent waste initiative in place and staff are trained



■ The plan aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40 per cent by 2030

- More than 1,400 homes and businesses have installed solar panels since 1990 across the county.
- While the population of Multnomah County has increased 26 per cent since 1990, fewer gallons of gasoline were sold in the county in 2010 than in 1990.
- Since 2009, the number of cyclists has increased by 14 per cent.
- Portland is home to nearly 150 certified green buildings, and has more LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum buildings than any other city in the US.
- Over 7,000 trees were planted in Portland in 2011 through a variety of programs including partnerships with Friends of Trees and the Youth Conservation Crew.
- Over 500 organizations and individuals have signed on to support the Multnomah Food Action Plan.

Source: City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

in sustainability methods. The bars host regular beer and bike festivals, which feature live bands, activities, BMX trick riders and breakdancers.

So from bikes to breweries, and exhibitions to exercise bikes, Portland is staking its claim to a greener future. ●

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# DAVID BARTON

The New York gym guru tells Magali Robathan how working out saved his life, why filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy has been a positive move, and about opening his first gym with a bag full of cash

**D**avid Barton grew up in Queens, New York and opened his first gym in Chelsea, New York in 1992. The fashionable, design-led club was an instant hit, attracting fans including Sandra Bernhard and designer Thierry Mugler

with its tagline of 'Look Better Naked'. It was followed by a second club in New York in 1995, and a third in Miami the same year. Further clubs followed in New York, Chicago, and Seattle, and celebrity clients included Renee Zellweger, Rachel Weisz and Daniel Craig. However, last year David Barton Gyms' parent company, Club Ventures,

filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in order to restructure an estimated \$65m of debt. The company emerged from Chapter 11 earlier this year, after teaming up with Meridian Sports Club in an operational partnership to open two new gyms in Los Angeles and one in Las Vegas this summer. Here, David Barton answers our questions about the highs and lows of his career so far.

## How did you first get into health and fitness?

I stepped into my first gym when I was about 11. I went to this real hardcore basement gym with the boyfriend of one of my older sisters. It was this dank, sweaty basement; I could smell the iron rusting and muscles being ripped apart. It was just this incredible place; cops working out next to drug dealers. I fell in love with it and didn't ever want to leave.

There was this camaraderie in the gym; it didn't matter what you did on the outside, it was just a matter of how strong you were. It was an amazing sort of democracy, and a little counter-culture of people who were into lifting weights.

Going to the gym became very important to me. I was getting into quite a bit of trouble and I think working out really saved my life – that's why it means so much to me today. It made me healthy and gave me focus and discipline. Working out is a real foundation for my way of life.

## Tell us about opening your first gym. How did that come about?

I graduated from Cornell University and got a job as a personal trainer, which paid me very little. I realised that I wanted to figure out a way to spend my time in the gym, so I started my own



PHOTO: MICHELLE HROD

David Barton started his career as a personal trainer

personal training business. I became very successful as a personal trainer, worked all hours and saved all my money until I had a bag full of cash.

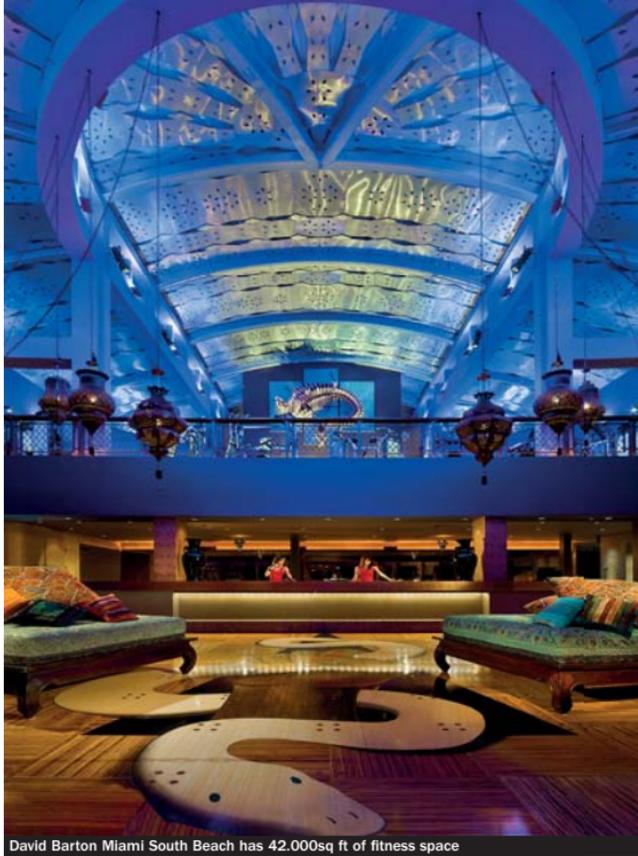
I thought that there was a market for an alternative to the gyms out there at the time. In the early 1990s, there were a lot of people with more taste than money. It wasn't so much about a luxury product as something that people who had taste would respond to.

I pounded the pavements and called people and crashed parties and knocked on doors and did everything I could for years to try to get a location and raise money. In the end I saved most of the money myself through training people, got a couple of other people to kick in a few dollars and found somebody to rent me a space that he didn't know what to do with.

With the little money I had, I built a gym. I couldn't really afford contractors or architects so I did it all myself. I bought light fittings from stores that were going out of business in the neighbourhood and spray-painted them, I found ways to get exercise equipment cheaply. I slept on the floor of the gym while we were building it so that every penny could go into the business. I just wanted to get the doors open of that one gym. I did, and it was a huge success.

#### **What did it offer?**

My first gym, in Chelsea, New York, offered an alternative to the suburbanised, commercial health clubs around



David Barton Miami South Beach has 42,000sq ft of fitness space

REBORN/AVO/OL/DH

at the time. Working out was considered to be very uncool; I opened it up to the fashionistas and the people who didn't like gyms but would go to one if it were cool and tasteful.

The design of gyms was really antiquated back then. I didn't have money to build anything palatial – it was very pared down, very simple, but was actually very beautiful in its simplicity. The music was great and we had great staff. I hired the staff myself, I trained them and dressed them and made them look cool. They were people you'd want to hang out with. It was also the first gym I'd seen that had trainers who could really change your body.

#### **When did you open the next gyms?**

Three years later I opened a gym in Miami in the Delano hotel and another one on the Upper East Side in New York. Each market is different. The

Miami club was really for the jet set [this later moved from the Delano hotel to the Gansevoort South]. The Chelsea gym really put me on the map. With the Upper East Side club I really wanted to build on the personal trainer business – attracting the Upper East Side clientele was quite a different proposition. I had more money to do that, so it really was another experiment in creating an environment that the neighbourhood would respond to.

#### **How would you describe the décor of your clubs? How important is their design?**

I don't think it's so much about décor as about emotion. I'm trying to get an emotional response from members and trying to stimulate their imagination. I try to get them to really focus on how they can look at the end of the process [of getting fit]. I'm in the

## TIMELINE

David Barton  
Gym openings

1992

Chelsea,  
New York

1995

Upper East Side,  
New York

1995

South Beach,  
Miami

2005

River North,  
Chicago

business of selling something a lot of people don't really like. They don't really want to exercise but they love the results they can get and they love the idea of having a new body.

When someone new comes in they tend to imagine how they will look on day two. We really try to get their imagination stimulated, to help them to think about how they will look three months down the line.

It's a sexy environment in our gyms, it's stimulating and it's fun. It's also comfortable and inviting – people want to stay there and hang out.

I've got to draw people in and make them have a good time while they are there and also make them really want to exercise. They should enjoy doing it and feel good about it. I want members to think about those changes to their body and their goals, what they want to look like and what they are trying to achieve from working out.

#### Why do people love your clubs?

It's like going to a great party – my gyms have got great people, great surroundings, great music. You get high on endorphins, but instead of waking up with a hangover you wake up and look in the mirror and you look better naked. Who wouldn't love that?

#### You went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy last year. Have you now emerged from this?

Yes, we emerged from Chapter 11 earlier this year after six months.

#### Why do you think you went into Chapter 11?

We were in part a victim of bad timing, expanding during a time when the economy was changing drastically. Chapter 11 was a difficult thing to go through, but we've come out with a much healthier business. It helped us to restructure. Luckily my members and investors stuck with me through the process, so in the end it was a very positive thing for us.

We teamed up with Meriden on the three new locations and we hope to do more with them. It's been a great partnership so far. Right now, it's just an operational partnership. Meriden is not a capital partner.

#### You've just opened a club in Las Vegas and are opening two more in LA this summer. What can we expect from the new clubs?

Our new club in Las Vegas is beautiful, people love it. Los Angeles is a great market for me. I'm a New Yorker but I've always dreamed of having gyms

in LA – it's where this whole workout thing started. The new clubs will be more of the same – I try to create gyms where people will feel sexy.

#### How have you funded the new clubs?

Through our investors, who have been with us right from the beginning. I don't want to name them right now.

#### What are your plans over the next 12 months?

I'm looking for locations in Las Vegas, which I think is a great market and a great opportunity. I'm always looking in New York, but the real estate market here is a lot tougher than in LA.

We're also looking in some secondary markets, including Chicago.

#### How many David Barton clubs would you like to open?

I think over the next couple of years we'll get to 15 and see how it goes.

#### Would you ever think about opening gyms outside of the US?

I have got a lot of calls from real estate developers, investors and operators in other countries. Certainly it's an exciting consideration and I'm open to it. I think there are a lot of places where the concept could do so well



Barton is known for his flamboyance



David Barton Chicago was the fourth club to open

2009

Bellevue,  
Seattle

2009

Astor Place,  
New York

2012

Tivoli Village,  
Las Vegas

2012

West Hollywood,  
Los Angeles

2012

Century City,  
Los Angeles

– it's just about finding the right deal and the right opportunity. I definitely think it's on the horizon.

**How are you going to celebrate David Barton Gyms' 20th anniversary?**

I'm going to have a huge workout and then throw a big party in one of my gyms. We're well known for great parties and this will be no exception.

**What motivates you?**

My son is 18. The other night I went to a dinner for parents of kids about to graduate. I see this next generation and I feel that what we do is so important. Fitness will hopefully save the ever-declining health of my country. Here food and inactivity is killing people. I'm really motivated to set the bar high and to make this business about quality and professionalism.

It's not out of reach for anyone to be healthy, to feel good and to have the body they dream of having. Our trademark tagline is 'look better naked', and I'm not ashamed of how shallow that may sound. I really do believe that when somebody works out in my gym and feels good in their body they leave here and become a better lawyer or politician or artist or whatever their contribution to the world is. I'm motivated by trying to make an impact on my little corner of the world.

**How would your friends describe you? And your critics?**

My friends would describe me as someone who loves to have a good time. I love what I do, probably because most of the time I do what I love. My life is filled with things that I love: I love my business, I love being in the gym. I live a charmed life.

I don't know what my critics say, because I don't speak with them.

**What do you do for pleasure?**

I'm a musician – I play the drums. I've played in a lot of punk rock bands, and right now I'm in a band called the Liquid Blonde, which plays elec-



The David Barton Spa at the Perry hotel in Miami features 10 treatment rooms

PHOTO: DAN ROBER

tronic rock. They are great and I think they're going to do really well.

I love hanging out with my son, while he will still hang out with me. I also love spending quality time with my schnauzer, Bippy.

**What's your favourite film and book?**

I have to read so much about exercise science, just to keep up on it, as I still work a lot with the trainers. I read a lot on biochemistry, movement science, neuroscience and everything that relates to exercise. My all time favourite book is *Crime and Punishment* though. I've probably read it 20 times.

My favourite movie ever is *Barry Lyndon*, Stanley Kubrick's epic period piece. It's really a film-making mas-

terpiece – he used genuine antique costumes, and filmed the candlelit scenes without using any artificial light. It's like a work of art.

**What have been your highest and lowest points?**

My highest point was opening up my first gym. I fought so hard for it. I started out without two pennies to rub together, and there I was opening up this gym, which was my dream. It was just the greatest business high.

As for the lowest point, I can't think of one. Since opening my first gym, there have been a lot of struggles, but there's never been anything that I didn't think I could resolve. I'm a very positive person and I never get that down. ●

# a true icon

Owned by Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hotel ICON employs hospitality students alongside professionals, who test cutting-edge concepts in prototype rooms designed by Terence Conran. General manager and adjunct associate professor Richard Hatter tells Jen Harbottle how the hotel is setting trends

Either Richard Hatter is a good storyteller or he has one of the best jobs in the hotel industry. Imagine James Bond visiting Q at gadget central as he prepares to take on the world: This is the picture Hatter conjures up as he describes the cutting edge technology and futuristic nature of operations at Hong Kong's Hotel ICON, of which he is the general manager.

Granted, Hatter doesn't pretend to be invincible, nor do his hotel's beds fly up against the wall at the flick of his gold watch, but he still makes the property sound like the prototype for the world's most forward-thinking hotel.

And in some ways, it is. The hotel contains three 'prototype' rooms, where advanced design, technology and lifestyle concepts are tested, to determine what guests do and don't want from their hotel experience. Currently, one of the rooms is set up with a Zeppelin Air iPod dock, Brinno digital peephole, Biozone airpurifier and a Cyberecture mirror – an interactive, intelligent mirror connected to the internet, which displays news and weather. On the drawing board for future testing are hypoallergenic furnishings, which means the hotel's carpet and curtains will clean themselves.

So far, so good. Despite only opening in April 2011, Hotel ICON has already received accolades for its design, serv-



ice and facilities, including the Condé Nast UK 'Hot List 2012'. It's made it onto the 2011 DestinAsian Luxe List for Asia-Pacific Top Hotels, its Above & Beyond Chinese Restaurant has been granted three 'fork-and-spoons' from the Michelin Guide Hong Kong Macau 2012, and it's one of Hong Kong's top five best ranked hotels on Trip Advisor. So, what makes it so good?

"Our guests just love our service," Hatter explains. "Our staff manage to get the right balance between being helpful and not overdoing it."



Leisure facilities include a health club, the Angsana Spa and the outdoor heated rooftop pool with views of the harbour (this picture)



But what makes Hotel ICON even more inspiring is the fact this cutting edge hotel is not bank-rolled by a large hotel chain. For Hotel ICON is owned by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) and has been set up primarily as a teaching and research hotel for the university's School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM).

In keeping with its James Bond-esque mystique, the hotel is housed in the same building as the laboratories and classrooms of SHTM and its primary function is to act as a test bed for its



The staff uniform 'collection' was designed by Barney Cheng and uses unconventional fabric swatches

hospitality management students. The hotel is run by 362 full time staff, 60 of which are students from the university's undergraduate programme, and all profits made by the hotel are ploughed back into the school, to fund further education. For Hatter, who works 80 per cent of his time as the hotel's general manager and 20 per cent as an adjunct professor teaching at the university, he sees the hotel and course as a way of shaping a new breed of future hotel luminaries.

"We teach the latest trends, we

inspire with the newest ideas and we deliver them in an honest and focused, forward-thinking, 'real' way," he explains. "You won't find what we teach our students in any textbook, or in the kind of company manual you get in other hotels. Our aim is to develop leaders who are bold, inventive, and who lead rather than follow."

#### HOW IT BEGAN

In 1976, PolyU began offering a vocational course in hotel management. At the time, Cornell University in the

US and Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland were the best known schools for hotel management. Yet in Asia and in particular, China and Macau, there was a boom in the hotel market and a gap in the number of qualified people to work in them. According to Hatter, even today, there are over 30,000 key management positions unfilled in hotels in China.

PolyU spotted a gap in the market for an top Asia-based hotel management school. In 1979 the government-owned university decided to

establish its School of Hotel & Tourism Management (SHTM) with the intention of making it one of the best hotel management schools in the world.

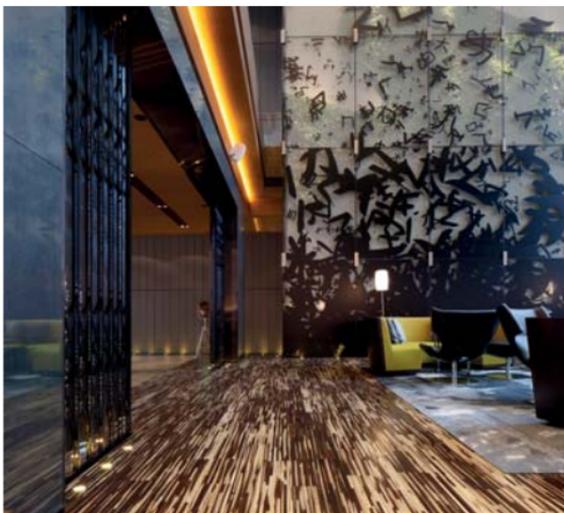
The school's reputation quickly began to grow. Today, PolyU is ranked number two in the world for research in hotel management and attracts almost 2,000 students from all over the world.

## THE HOTEL

In 2005, PolyU decided to convert its student dorms next door to its main campus into a teaching research hotel. In doing this, it had three main aims; to offer managerial training for its students, to offer "real world" experiences to its students and to become a centre of excellence for the global hotel industry. PolyU provided the US\$167m (HK\$1.3bn) needed to build the hotel, the School of Hotel and Tourism Management and the University House Complex. In support, the government offered a low land premium.

Because of the altruistic nature of the project, Hatter says PolyU managed to pull in some of Hong Kong's top designers to work on the architecture, interior design, uniforms and branding at Hotel ICON. He describes Hotel ICON as "a stylish testament to Hong Kong's creative energy and vibrant art scene." The hotel showcases work from the city's celebrated designers and visionaries including Rocco Yim, William Lim, Vivienne Tam and Freeman Lau.

The hotel has 262 rooms and its facilities include an Angsana spa, health club, and outdoor pool overlooking Hong Kong's harbour. Its Chinese fine dining restaurant Above & Beyond and the more informal Market restaura-



Elaborate handcrafted iron gates flank the entrance to the Green café bar

**As soon as a hospitality textbook is printed it's out of date. Instead, if I want to make a point to my students I can bring in my director of revenue or F&B manager**

rant were both designed by Conran & Partners, while the Green café bar was designed by William Lim.

Year-to-date occupancy is at 75 per cent. Currently, 24 per cent of guests come from Europe, 15 per cent from China, 13 per cent from the US and eight per cent from Australia. The remainder come from within other parts of Asia. Hatter insists they do

not conceal the fact that Hotel ICON is a teaching and research hotel. "Hotel ICON is a hotel with a purpose," he says. "Far from detracting from their stay, guests wax lyrical about our outstanding service standards."

## CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

But it's not just the guests who are impressed by Hotel ICON. The hotel is so advanced in terms of technology and thought-leadership that Hatter regularly plays host to hoteliers who come to be inspired by what they see. From state-of-the-art Bose sound systems in guest bedrooms to the latest Wi-Fi and flat screen IPTV technology, the hotel is an experiment in futuristic guest experiences. Right now, for instance, Hotel ICON's prototype paperless guest software system is so far ahead of its time that other hotel operators would struggle to get their hands on it. Even the staff uniforms have been designed using unconventional fabric swatches. Hatter says innovation is at the core of everything they do at the



▲ The hotel was in profit after three months and any surplus goes back into PolyU

## RICHARD HATTER > CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

As proof we all have to start somewhere, Hatter's career in hospitality began in Southsea, where he combined a job as a bottle washer at the Pendragon Hotel with the position of waiter at Southsea's Playboy Club and Casino. Born in the UK but raised in Singapore, Tanzania and Ghana, Hatter completed his undergraduate studies in hotel catering and institutional management at the University of Portsmouth.

Having decided on a career in hotel management, Hatter took on management positions with luxury hotel groups in the UK, Caribbean, Bahrain and Bangkok, including with Gulf Hotels and Dusit Thani Hotels and Resorts. As assistant manager at Treasure Isle Hotel in The British Virgin Islands, Hatter met Richard Branson by chance, when he was windsurfing past Branson's Necker Island Resort.

For 17 years, Hatter worked for Shangri-La Hotels & Club Resorts; the last four as director of development, where he was responsible for driving the repositioning of Shangri-La hotels in many of China's second-tier cities, as well as in Singapore, Fiji, The Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

According to Hatter, a key point in his career was in 2000 when he was invited by the owner of Shangri-La to manage one of the Kuak family's private leisure clubs in Hong Kong, The Aberdeen Marina Club – one of the most prestigious private clubs in Hong Kong. Hatter introduced a family concept to the club, including a children's play centre based



on a concept from his home town in Portsmouth, called Adventure Zone. It was a resounding success; membership grew and it led to him being offered a role as a director at Shangri-La.

## LET'S GET PERSONAL RICHARD HATTER

### > What are the biggest lessons that you've taken from your corporate hotel career into your current role?

Believe in yourself and don't get drawn into 'corporate hype'. You need to have a strong sense of who you are and what you can offer, because you can't expect others to have it for you.

### > Do you have any advice for those entering the hotel industry?

Every job you take will give invaluable experience in some way, so don't worry that your first job is your only chance to set the path for your career and future. I've worked for both some horrendous and some amazing bosses, who became mentors. As a college graduate entering the industry the key is to be a confident, passionate communicator.

### > Which hotels inspire you?

I remember walking into the lobby of the Sukhothai in Bangkok. I was invited for the grand opening in 1993 and my jaw literally dropped. It was authentic, haute style and architectural cool – both sophisticated yet informal and Thai-

inspired in every detail from the design to the food. It was cultural, spiritual and philosophical and had a sense of place. I think the whole notion of gigantic, corporate hotel chains trying to manufacture cool, boutique, sub-brands is bogus. If you have to say you're a cool hotel then you're not.

### > Who do you admire in business?

The early Philippe Starck/Ian Schrager tie up radically altered the hotel landscape. I have a tremendous respect for anyone who has the courage and confidence to create and deliver unique interiors and open independent hotels with style and energy, because I know how unbelievably difficult that is to do.

### > How would you sum up your approach to life?

My parents sent my brothers and I to boarding schools in Africa and the UK, so we would learn to mix instead of going to a school where we knew eve-

My approach is 'discovery through real life' – start young, get out there and make mistakes whilst living

ryone. We travelled in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and learned about different cultures and different cuisine. As a result, my family 'looks different' because we 'think different'. I call it 'Discovery through real life' – start young, get out there and make mistakes whilst living.

### > What drives you?

My wife and children, Aisha 19, Ashton 16, Maya 6 and Matthew 4. There's no secret other than to be in love with the woman you're sharing your life with.



▲ The project pulled in top designers such as Terence Conran & Partners who designed the Above & Beyond restaurant and lounge area



## WE WANT TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE TO OUR STUDENTS ABOUT HOW THEY SHOULD APPROACH THEIR THINKING. WE CREATE TRENDS – NOT FOLLOW THEM



hotel. “We want to set a good example to our students about how they should approach their thinking. We create trends – not follow them.”

Because it plays such an important role in the future of the hotel industry, the SHTM collects data from guests that stay at Hotel ICON, which is then analysed by the students and published and reported via research papers given by the SHTM professors at industry seminars. The data is used to improve efficiency and the guest experience at the hotel.

### DOWN TO BUSINESS

Like any business, Hotel ICON is expected to turn over a profit. The hotel was cash positive after the first month of operation and in profit after three. Any surplus goes straight back into education and research at the PolyU. Having said that, achieving financial success – although important – isn’t what drives Hatter.

What gets Hatter excited is nurturing future talent for the hospitality and tourism industry in the Asia Pacific region.

“I was looking for something more meaningful in my work,” he explains. “All the staff here, including me, have dual responsibility, to be a mentor to the students. It allows me to tap into my desires to address the different ways in which students learn.”

### MAIN COURSE

The SHTM offers students higher diploma, bachelor, masters and doctorate courses in hotel and tourism management. The SHTM has a Professor For a Day scheme, in which industry professionals are invited to speak to students. Hatter says this is a much more responsive way of learning.

“As soon as a hospitality text book is printed, it’s out of date,” he says. “If I want to make a point to my students, I can bring in my director of revenue or my F&B manager to tell

them the way things really are.”

Students have to complete industry placements as part of their study. Although they can choose to work in any hotel in the world, Hatter says many opt to work at Hotel ICON. “Hotel ICON is an independent hotel unfettered by any brand,” Hatter explains. “We can be much more experimental here. There’s no corporate guy saying ‘you can’t do that’. We’re about nurturing responsive, confident, open-minded, inspiring people – future leaders.”

Every six weeks, interns at Hotel ICON work in a new department, from F&B to admin, to guest rooms. They also do a stint in the research department to learn about guest profiling.

For Hatter, the Hotel ICON model represents the future for hotel and tourism education. “We’re the tomorrow hotel,” he says. “Our elite students are sure to become tomorrow’s future hospitality leaders, which is very exciting for the future of the hotel industry.” ●

# DESIGNING AN ICON

There's a reason why Hotel ICON looks so stylish; some of the world's top designers have worked on it. We take a look at who did what



## INTERIOR DESIGN ▲

by William Lim

William Lim was responsible for the interior design of Hotel ICON. Throughout the hotel, his use of circular themes and motifs is a deliberate technique to create a sense of space and harmony. Hong Kong-born designer Lim mixes modern trends with traditional architectural elements, to give the hotel a sense of place and to create cultural touchstones.



## INTERIOR DESIGN ▲

by Conran & Partners

Conran & Partners, founded by Terence Conran, were the designers of the restaurants Above & Beyond and The Market. Conran says that the biggest challenge of the project was "creating something that set [the restaurants] apart from their competitors, given that there was an abundance of both types of spaces already in existence in Hong Kong."



## UNIFORM DESIGN ▲

by Barney Cheng

The creator of Hotel ICON's uniforms, Barney Cheng is one of Hong Kong's most famous style gurus. Cheng says Hatter gave him free reign to come up with the design, requesting only that the uniforms be part of a 'collection' that the hotel staff could mix and match on their own - something he describes as a "fresh, more creative process."



## ARCHITECTURE ▲

by Rocco Yim

Rocco Yim is one of Hong Kong's most prominent design architects. His practice has been responsible for the design of many of the defining buildings in the region including the International Finance Centre, Hong Kong Station and Guangdong Museum. "What attracted me to this project was the promise that the design was to be chosen from an architectural competition. This was, and still is in Hong Kong, a rare arrangement, but it showed the client's commitment to good design from the start," explains Yim.

"The finished building manages to project a strong visual identity which is not just an object to be looked at, but a three-dimensional spatial composition."



## VERTICAL GARDEN ▲

by Dr Patrick Blanc

The vertical garden at Hotel ICON was designed by Patrick Blanc, the French creator of the vertical greenery concept and a botanist at the French National Centre for Scientific Research. It's the largest one-piece vertical garden in Asia. Blanc says Hotel Icon's air quality, "adds to the psychological and relaxing wellbeing of all the persons standing or sitting just in front of it."





# HOT TOPIC

The world of renewable energy is changing fast, with new technology and legislation affecting the leisure industry. Laura-Clare Davies looks at what's new and provides solutions for reducing energy consumption and costs

**T**he management of commercial energy use is beset with challenges, but what it comes down to is ensuring you're not spending over the odds.

The introduction of Feed-in Tariffs in 2010 drove increases in the installation of both wind farms and photovoltaics across the UK, and the benefits of this can be seen both in the energy savings that can be yielded from sustainable technologies and the profit that can be made from any surplus energy that is generated.

Joining the gang as an emerging payment initiative for renewable energy is the relatively recent Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme. Designed to aid business investment in renewable heat technologies, the initiative was launched by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in November 2011 for non-domestic users and has been hailed as the first of its kind in the world.

Simply put, the RHI is a financial incentive scheme that guarantees cashback payments for 20 years

on renewable heat technologies.

For example, if you were to install a ground source heat pump to manage your building's heating and cooling, you would not only save money by reducing your need for gas or oil, but you would also be paid a fixed rate for the heat you generate.

Of course the government never tires of reminding us of the UK's carbon reduction targets – to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 – and the RHI is the latest in a line of initiatives that will certainly contribute to encouraging sustainability. The bigger picture, however, is how the RHI can work for businesses as part of an effective energy-saving strategy.

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF BIOMASS FUEL

Energy conservation specialist

Carbon Control played a key role in a £500,000 project at the Tre-Ysgawen Hall Country House Hotel and Spa on Anglesey in North Wales.

The hotel is thought to be the first in Wales to harness the power of biomass for its heating and hot water.

Carbon Control carried out a site assessment ahead of procuring and project managing the installation of a wood chip-powered biomass boiler and purpose-built energy centre.

The equipment will cost the hotel £40,000 a year to run, less than half what it was previously spending on oil, and the business will also benefit



■ The Tre-Ysgawen uses a biomass boiler

from subsidies under the government's Renewable Heat Incentive scheme.

Biomass is a renewable energy source which uses material from living, or recently-living organisms such as wood, waste, gas, and alcohol fuels to power the boiler environmentally.

### THE POTENTIAL

Born from a desire to move the UK towards diversifying its energy sources, the RHI is a step-change to reducing our reliance on traditional fossil fuels supplies, the cost for which has been on the increase.

The generation of heat accounts for a staggering 47 per cent of the UK's total energy consumption, and through the RHI the government has committed that 12 per cent of heating will come from renewable sources by 2020. (Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change, March 2011).

So the intentions are clear but the question on everyone's lips is how the



## Renewable Heat Incentive

ASK TED, THE ENERGY DESK'S SPECIALIST HELP DESK, ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

**Have many companies applied to the Renewable Heat Incentive since it launched in November 2011?**

As with all new schemes there's been a bedding-in period and renewable heat systems can take three months to design and install. Although the scheme saw limited take-up initially, we – and our technology partner Constructive Renewables – are noticing a steady rise in applications as awareness increases.

**For how long will the RHI tariff last and how frequently will I receive payments?**

The scheme guarantees payments for 20 years on energy generated from renewable heat sources, though the tariffs will vary based on the size of the system and the volume of energy produced. Participants will receive quarterly payments, regulated by Ofgem.

**How will the RHI help the UK achieve its carbon reduction targets?**

Renewable heat technologies such as biomass boilers and solar thermal systems are essentially carbon neutral, whereby they produce and emit no CO<sub>2</sub>. So not only is the scheme financially beneficial, but it is also set to make a huge environmental impact as adoption increases.

**If I installed a renewable heat technology system, would I still need a traditional electricity supply?**

Renewable heat systems generally replace the heating of water and space. For example, if you have a boiler system that uses gas or oil and supplies your central heating and hot water supply, by replacing it with a Ground Source Heat Pump, you will no longer need your gas or oil supply.

**How do I know which renewable heat system is suitable for me?**

There are many different technologies, the application of which will vary depending on your operations. For example, if you have a requirement for heating and cooling, a Ground Source Heat Pump would be an appropriate option. Alternatively, if you have a boiler that uses oil, you could replace it with a biomass boiler. If you're unsure, seek guidance to ensure you get the maximum benefit from your system.

**If I already have a renewable heat system, will I qualify for the RHI?**

Existing systems can qualify for the scheme but on the condition that they were installed after 15 July 2009.



RHI scheme can be utilised in the best interests of their business.

The answer is simpler than one might assume: the key is determining which system best suits your operation.

The beauty of the RHI is undoubtedly the profit that can be made from the energy produced. Through the scheme, generators can be paid up to 8.9p per kWh, although the tariff – administered by Ofgem – depends on the systems used and volume of energy generated.

### PICKING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

There are lots of options, including biomass boilers, solar panels, Combined Heat and Power Plants (CHP) and

Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP). A leisure centre that requires a continuous supply of hot water would benefit from a CHP plant or a biomass boiler to replace older heating systems that require gas or oil, while a ground source heat pump would be more suitable for a building that requires seasonal heating and cooling.

### FINANCING THE SOLUTION

The obvious question is where to source the capital for the investment. If you're looking to reduce energy spend, it's unlikely you'll have the capital available to enter the RHI.

As the scheme matures, financ-

ing packages will emerge but already we're finding that energy suppliers, for example, will provide renewable heat technology alongside their existing services. Likewise, there are many lending options specifically designed for the installation of efficiency solutions, such as the Carbon Trust, which will provide the upfront capital costs for equipment that presents an attractive return on investment. ●

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# Keeping it simple

From Edgbaston Stadium to Bewilderwood, Kate Corney finds out how leisure venues are using the latest ticketing systems to make life easier for customers

## Tor caters for Media Museum

The National Media Museum in Bradford, UK, has installed a bespoke version of Tor Systems Ltd's Maxim Ticketing system.

The installation has included several new features to fit the wide-ranging needs of the museum. These include setting up different selling areas, categorising events, segmenting data,

e-ticketing, real-time availabilities, locks to avoid double bookings and touch screen sales/collection kiosk terminals.

The CRM module will be used to update customer data; it was essential that the system could cope with cross-selling, as well as run the different membership types required by the museum.

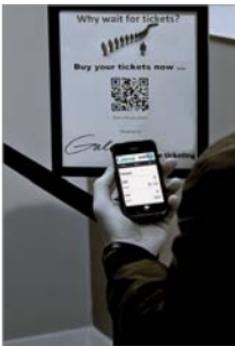


## Skidata technology for St Helens RFC fans

St Helens Rugby Football Club in Merseyside has installed APT Skidata technology to manage its visitor numbers and integrate its ticket and retail sales.

The equipment streamlines the ticketing process at each entrance to the club's Langtree Park stadium. It also enables fans to buy their ticket and merchandise from the club website and print their ticket at home. Richard Adams at Skidata said, "This offers the club's fans a completely effortless shopping and visitor experience."

## Gateway launches Mobile Web ticketing solution



The eGalaxy Mobile Web Store solution from Gateway Ticketing Systems aims to help customers improve operational efficiency and increase sales.

Customers will be able to target mobile consumers through the technology. It encourages guests to use their phones to buy en route or on arrival to avoid lines. They can also order more tickets from inside the attraction without returning to the gate.

For guests, the eGalaxy Mobile Web Store solution means no ticket lines, a more convenient purchasing option and no lost tickets. For the attractions industry, it means less ticket stock and smoother operations.

## Museums and monuments go to Gamma

Ticketing software by Gamma Dataware has been installed in an ancient Edinburgh monument as well as attractions including the SeaCity Museum in Southampton.

The LeisurePOS solution system, which includes ticketing and admissions, has been set up at Rosslyn Chapel, which was built in the 1400s and popularised by Dan's Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.



## Android app now available for Edgbaston

Edgbaston Stadium in Birmingham has become the first UK cricket venue to create an app for Android platforms.

Designed and built by Cricket World Media, the app provides a mobile platform to purchase tickets for England's three international fixtures being staged at Edgbaston over the 2012 summer. It also keeps cricket fans up to date with the latest domestic and international cricket news and includes video interviews from Warwickshire County Cricket Club players, including current England star Ian Bell.

James McLaughlin commercial director at Edgbaston said:



"We've made the ticketing process even easier but also are keen to ensure that fans get the latest Warwickshire and

England news wherever they may be."

The app will also be rolled out to Blackberry and Windows Phone and follows the launch to iPhone users last year.



## Clarity developing its kiosks software

Clarity's ticketing software solution, part of the ClarityLive POS software suite for leisure environments, is adding to its kiosk features. This year, Clarity will be rolling out software updates for kiosks as part of its plan to enable kiosks to do more than just collect tickets.

The update will mean kiosks can issue tickets, accept payments and rebok activities in one place.

Kevin Anson, Clarity divisional director, said, "Clarity kiosks deliver an attractive, versatile and easy to use customer interface."

## Open Frontiers save zoos time



Twycross Zoo, Aspinall Foundation zoos and Bewilderwood have installed Open Frontiers's latest point of sale product TimePOS. Open Frontier managing director, Oliver Wigdahl, said the TimePOS web-enabled sales system has already started slashing ticket queuing times.

"Getting visitors into the park quickly and efficiently without queuing is paramount," said Wigdahl. "The guests want to enjoy the fullest day possible and the operators want to have maximum opportunity to harvest secondary spend. Add to this the absolute necessity of capturing personal customer data for membership, affiliation, gift aid, or marketing purposes, and the need for speed at the point-of-sale has never been greater."

## OmniTicket releases new app

OmniTicket will be releasing an iPhone visit-planner application this summer. The app will provide a wide variety of options including mobile ticket sales.

The app was part of a seminar about online ticketing solutions and social media at OmniTicket's Best Overview System (BOS) summit in May. BOS is a solution that allows attractions to design their own POS experience.



# SEARCHING FOR QUALITY? CHERCHEZ LE GASCON

French chefs Pascal Aussignac and Germain Marquis are bringing traditional Gascon cuisine to the UK in very different ways, but what they both share is a desire to keep it simple, says Grahame Senior

In a more forgiving economic climate, achieving a 'high level of mediocrity' (once the stated strategic aim of one of our leading hospitality operators) might well have been enough to get you by. In today's demanding and economically constrained world, only the very best will do. Success in the hospitality and leisure business today demands ever more of the operator. Integrity and top class performance in every aspect is demanded.

## BRITAIN - WORLD FOCUS FOR FOODIES?

Over the past 20 years or so, Britain has undergone a revolution in restaurant provision. The British cooking scene has created a host of superstar chefs whose opinions, publications and enterprises have flourished and waned with all the usual rhythm of reality. Those who have continually improved and perfected their food offering have largely remained and prospered. Those who have been distracted from their purpose by the heady trappings of media success and celebrity have in many cases disappeared.

It was ever thus. No matter how much hype, innovation and sheer chutzpah is invested in new ways of delivering pleasure on a plate, at

the end of the day, it does come down to the three Cs: Cooking, Consistency and Commitment to quality.

## FRANCE STILL CARES DEEPLY FOR FOOD

Long before the rise of modern British cooking, France was famous for food. From the days of Elizabeth David onwards, we Brits have wondered at the quality, range and diversity of the products of the French kitchen. Sadly, France has suffered as much as (or even more than) we have from the fast food invasion and, to an extent, the growth of the workaholic society ("Lunch is for wimps!" becoming the battle cry). However, in *la France Profonde* good cooking is still the order of the day in domestic kitchens and in the regional restaurants.

It is arguable that the French haute cuisine truly has a simpler beat at its heart. That great heart is Gascon.

Gascony has long delivered a robust celebration of good food, well cooked and lovingly presented. Of course, it is a region richly blessed in natural resources. From the duck, geese and foie gras culture of Les Landes right through to the foothills of the



Pyrenees, you will find foodie perfection. With truffles to search for and acorns and beechmast to munch, the forests are a paradise for pigs. The restaurants offer perfection on a plate for pork lovers and the resources of the sea and rivers are no less rich and no

less well used. In Gascony lunch is not for wimps but is a proper punctuation in each day for those who understand the art of living well.

Gascony is the country of bucolic pleasures and Boccaccian gusto. The land of d'Artagnan also throws up sophisticated and intelligent cooking and gastronomy like that temple of Sybaritic sense that is Michel Guerard's Pres d'Eugenie. Nowhere is the balance between robust ingredients perfectly prepared and finesse more exquisitely explored than in his cuisine minceur. Eating well and living well do not have to be alternatives, they can be good companions.

Throughout France, restaurateurs and hoteliers follow the Gascon tradition and find it a robust route to success with the demanding diners of today.

## GREAT BRITISH GASCONS

Interestingly, we have two superb practitioners in this country of this passion for perfect regional seasonal produce perfectly presented – Germain Marquis, owner of Le Clos du Marquis in Hampshire, and Pascal Aussignac, owner of Club Gascon in London. While they couldn't be more different in their approach in terms

“

Eating well and living well  
do not have to be alternatives.  
They can be good companions

”



Pascal Aussignac (above) opened Michelin-starred French restaurant Club Gascon in 1998

### Achingly cool, thrillingly authentic: **Club Gascon**

**C**lub Gascon in London's Smithfield is about as far removed from Hampshire in both location and style as it's possible to get, yet it offers much the same model. Both restaurants have cook shops, both restaurants sell ingredients and wines and both restaurants are true to their Gascon roots.

However, the Smithfield crowd is a world away from the Shire market of Clos du Marquis. It's a very sophisticated mix of metropolitan foodies, serious business people and well travelled families. Pascal Aussignac's style of cooking matches and is the essence of refinement.

It is, however, also the essence of Gascony, with a commitment to freshness and authenticity of ingredients that is almost religious. If Pierre Gangaire outdoes even Heston Blumenthal in his weird combinations, Pascal Aussignac goes in the opposite direction, creating an intensity of flavour which is quite remarkable from a very focused range of ingredients. Of all the restaurants I have ever taken guests to in London, this is the one that best delivers the shock of the new. Yet it does this by taking traditional ingredients and presenting them with a freshness and inventiveness that remains true to its Gascon roots.

of style of cooking and dining appeal, at their heart Marquis and Aussignac are both fully Gascon with a respect for the ingredients that shines through their entirely different styles. One is robustly and resolutely rooted in the country, the other is as achingly metropolitan as it is possible to be.

Each is achieving considerable success in these challenging times. Each appears to have the rigour and focus on quality and consistency that will stand the tests of time very effectively. Perhaps most importantly of all each is always full with happy diners. Success on a plate!

I don't know whether Marquis and Aussignac know each other or whether there is some secret league of Gascons who plot to deliver ever better hospitality. If there is, I hope one day I get invited to one of their meetings. Dissimilar in so many respects, both Clos du Marquis and Club Gascon have one wonderful thing in common – they're always full with happy people. Surely that is the essence of success.

Keep it simple, do it well, release your inner Gascon. ●

### Traditional style, exacting standards: **Le Clos du Marquis**

**H**ow difficult to be simple' was the mantra of Pierre Bocuse. It's a mantra delivered to zealous effect by Germain Marquis in his traditional restaurant in the heart of Hampshire. He is Gascon, his food is Gascon and his standards are Gascon. It is simple, bucolic, robust, rustic and pretty well near perfect.

To eat his rabbit with mustard is to return to the blue remembered hills of the France of our youthful visits. Simple ingredients, perfectly prepared and perfectly presented. The hospitality too has that quality of commitment and nothing is taken for granted. Every day, Germain greets every diner, and his wife Glanis is a charming chatelaine. Even the restaurant manager, Garth (a bit of a ringer for Gerard Depardieu, despite the fact that he is South African) presents an aura of confident, all-encompassing



Le Clos du Marquis is in Hampshire

hospitality. Their love of good food shines through every aspect of the operation.

The wine list is also a triumph and resolutely South Western. It is a triumph because it takes this relatively unknown region and delivers superb quality at amazing value. Germain, Glanis and Garth have got their market dead right. They like it traditional but it must be good and it must be good value. I have never been there when it's not been packed.

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## JULIAN LEYBOURNE

Icon Training was named as one of the UK's top training providers in April 2012 after it was awarded Outstanding status by Ofsted. Tom Walker speaks to founder Julian Leybourne about Icon's success and his passion for leisure

**T**he news that Icon Training had become the first leisure company to obtain seven Grade 1s from its Ofsted inspection was heralded as a landmark for the industry. In its glowing report, Ofsted stated that Icon Training's skills tutors are highly regarded by employers and learners who recognise and appreciate the contribution they make to the leisure industry. Ofsted also praised the influence Icon had on the professionalising of the active leisure sector.

The report said: 'Icon Training is very well managed and has a strong impact on the leisure industry it serves. It provides an inspirational resource for the industry and has transformed many learners' lives. With a current learner success rate of 93 per cent, the company's success rates have continued to improve much faster than the national average.'

Founded in 1995 by chief executive Julian Leybourne, Icon Training currently delivers training programmes in more than 200 assessment sites nationwide. Leybourne's career in leisure spans nearly 40 years after he started out as a training manager in the early 1970s.

### Why do you think Icon Training has been so successful?

Our success is directly attributed to three factors. First, our outstanding leadership and management focus. Second, our dynamic, inspirational skills tutors. And third, the way we work with employers as a partnership.



Icon Training offers a range of courses in leisure, fitness, coaching, management, customer service and business administration

The employers contribute to our success, because obviously without them the whole thing wouldn't work.

### How important is it for the fitness industry to have well-qualified staff?

One of the greatest achievements from SkillsActive was to create the Register of Exercise Professional (REPs). For the first time there was something that regulated and endorsed competency-based qualifications. Qualifications are one thing but CPD is another, and sector professionals need to demonstrate that competencies are being updated. As chair of the National Management Board for Wales with CIMSPA I am keen that we promote professionalism within the sector. Joining a Chartered Institute will add value to the sector and provide sport and physical activity professionals with a means to top up their CPD and network with other professionals.

While I believe that having a technical qualification in fitness is



essential, the best fitness professionals are not just technically competent, they also need to have training in a range of disciplines including customer excellence. This enables them to fully understand the barriers – both real and perceived – to their clients. They also need to understand how to be truly customer-centric.

### What does it mean for Icon to achieve the 'outstanding' assessment from Ofsted?

It's a historic achievement. I think that it's a recognition and endorsement of the integrity, value, professionalism and quality that Icon represents.

The assessment itself is an incredibly rigorous and intensive experience. There are several inspectors who stay with you the whole week and follow you around, talk to your staff, the employers you work with, the partners and also the learners. Mac Cleves, Icon Training's MD was the nominee and he met the challenge well by addressing the inspection priorities and producing a comprehensive programme for inspection. ●

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