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Lawrence Dallaglio

Using rugby to
transform the
attitudes of troubled
young people p24



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Finding a fair balance

The long-term stability of the local authority contracting market is starting to look vulnerable, as councils push too hard for good deals and contractors start to dream of freedom

The UK's local government contracting set-up has served the nation well for decades now: we're fortunate to have strong, committed organisations running our facilities and supporting local communities – most of them on a not-for-profit basis.

But cracks are starting to show in the system, as some councils simply become too demanding in terms of the contracts they're offering to operators.

In the early days of contracting, councils routinely paid operators a fee to deliver services, but those days are long gone, and today the situation is typically reversed, with contractors paying councils.

The risk of making the contract succeed financially then falls to the management contractor, who must bear all the costs and make the whole thing hang together.

In practice, there are limited numbers of revenue streams available – gym memberships and fees from swimming lessons being two major ones. After that, the majority of services need to be subsidised.

Privately, more and more contract management companies are asking why they should take on such onerous and risky contracts, when they could cut themselves free from council constraints and launch their own operations without the limits associated with contract management work.

If this happens and the idea gathers momentum, some councils will not only find themselves in a situation where no-one is interested in running their facilities, they'll also find they've spawned a

“

Privately, some contract management companies are asking why they should take on onerous council contracts when they could launch their own operations

whole raft of new competition just down the road, as contractors jump ship and launch rival businesses.

The balance of power in this relationship is complicated – on the one hand, the ability of councils to control contracts is based on the healthy levels of competition which exist in the contracting market.

This gives councils a feeling of security – there'll always be another contractor interested in bidding.

On the other side are powerful businesses which have worked hard to diversify into a broad range of areas to create a stable financial base and in many cases, this involves them in owner/operator enterprises, without any council involvement.

It wouldn't take much more of a push for some contractors to throw in the towel and begin to compete with councils rather than collaborate.

On page 30, we talk to leading operators about the lay of the land and the consensus is that change is needed. Councils would be wise to listen.

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LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, SPORTS MANAGEMENT

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We wanted to showcase normal women and I was clear from the start we shouldn't feature athletes, because they're so far from our everyday experiences

TANYA JOSEPH • ARCHITECT, THIS GIRL CAN

You were the architect of This Girl Can. How the campaign came about?

When I joined Sport England in 2012, the organisation didn't have a communications relationship with the people it was trying to influence – the consumers.

I was keen we should have a relationship with real people – the people who matter for us. The organisation is judged entirely on how successful it is at getting people active, but it was relying on its investment partners, and there was a general feeling that we needed to change that.

I was struck by the fact there's a huge gender imbalance in sports participation, which, at its worst, meant 2 million fewer women than men were doing sport or being active at least once a week. This Girl Can was born of a desire to change this.

What barriers did you identify?

Sport England had been collecting data for a really long time, so we had the last *Active People* survey and evaluation reports from a whole host of previous interventions. One of the most powerful pieces of data was 70 per cent of women saying they were interested in doing sport. So, one of things we really wanted to know was what's stopping them?

When we looked closely what women had been telling us, we found a host of reasons. Most were the kind of things you'd expect, like not having time, not liking their body, not knowing the rules, not wanting it to be too competitive, etc.

We looked at this and realised, overall, women are exhibiting a fear of judgement, of what other people will think about them, and they're also judging themselves. That was the lightbulb moment for us.

What were the key strategies used to change the behaviours of such a large population?

To start with, we developed a manifesto that said that women come in all shapes, sizes and levels of ability, and it doesn't matter if you're expert or rubbish, the point is simply to do something.

We wanted to do a really non-judgemental campaign that says to women: "you're not alone in feeling all of these things, and here are some examples of women who have found ways of overcoming that fear of judgement".

I was clear from the start we shouldn't feature athletes or celebrities, because frankly, although we love our athletes and we want them to do well, they're so far



Joseph worked to enable Sport England to influence consumers



70 per cent of women were interested in doing sport. We wanted to know what was stopping them

from our everyday experiences. And that's their job – to be extraordinary.

We wanted to showcase normal women and tell their stories, and use a tone of voice that would resonate with women – fun and sassy and a bit tongue-in-cheek.

Were you surprised by the success?

It was extraordinary. We started with a very soft launch. We just did social media – we put a couple of videos up and didn't promote them at all to start with. Within a month we had around 2,000 Twitter followers and I was really happy with that. Then we launched the above the line campaign starting with a 90 second TV ad during *Coronation Street*. And we went from having 2,000 Twitter followers to 20,000 in a matter of hours. Since then the community has just grown and grown.

I jiggle, therefore I am.

THIS
GIRL
CAN

In its first year, the campaign encouraged 2.8 million women to do more sport

One of the things we decided right from the start was that we wanted this to be a campaign that is owned by women and that they want to share. This has really driven it. Our social audience has grown month on month, even when we've been off-air. And we've been talked about on social media every day since the campaign launched, which is quite extraordinary when you think how small our media buy was compared to other campaigns.

In the first phase of the campaign, which is the phase I was responsible for, we were only above the line for about 10 weeks over two years. The rest was social.

Was there a change in behaviour and how did you measure this?

There was rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the campaign, over and above *Active People*. We did qualitative and quantitative surveys and saw quickly that the campaign was having an impact. In its first year, it inspired 2.8 million women to do more sport, of whom 1.6 million hadn't done sport since they left school.

In terms of the return on investment, it's the most successful intervention that Sport England has ever done. It's very gratifying and I'm incredibly proud of it.



The tone of This Girl Can was designed to be fun, sassy and a bit tongue in cheek

Will the campaign produce long-lasting behaviour change?

Like all things, it needs to evolve, that's the way to sustain behaviour change. And there'll be new generations of girls who will need to keep hearing these messages.

It's like discouraging smoking or drink driving, you can't just have a single intervention, you need to keep going.

Yes, we might have raised awareness among a particular group of women and got really good penetration, but we have to keep asking – what else can we do to raise awareness and to make people feel as though it's worth having a go?

We also need to realise that some women will inevitably drop out. It's important to make it clear that it's normal to have a break – it doesn't matter if they

didn't run yesterday or last month or the month before, or if they're not sure that they'll run tomorrow, women should celebrate the fact they're running today.

How can the sport sector help?

So many people in the sector think if you paint it pink women will come along. But organisations need to learn from This Girl Can, and think about what they can offer the type of woman to whom the campaign appeals – who isn't yet committed.

Whether you're a leisure centre or an NGB, you need to think about women's experiences from the moment they contact you – when they're looking at your website, or being greeted at the door. How can you ensure the promise of This Girl Can is delivered in the experience they get? ▶



I'd like to see skiing become a more accessible sport. There needs to be far more investment in grassroots participation and it's an ideal time to start afresh

EDDIE 'THE EAGLE' EDWARDS • OLYMPIC SKI JUMPER



Eddie Edwards does 20 to 30 talks a year to encourage kids into sport

Where did your ambitions come from?

My dream to get the Winter Olympics started when I was eight years old. I loved watching sport on TV, especially the popular sports show *Ski Sunday*.

When I was 13, I went on a school skiing trip to the Italian Dolomites and luckily enough, just 10 miles away in Gloucester, I had access to one of the biggest dry ski slopes in the country where I could practice and have a few lessons. I did my first ski jump on the school ski trip, which I did as a dare after only skiing for a day and a half. Just 11 years later, my love for the sport took me to the Winter Olympics.

Olympic ski jumper Eddie 'the Eagle' Edwards became Great Britain's first Olympic ski jumper since 1929, representing the country at the Calgary Winter Games in 1988. Following the success of the 2016 film *Eddie the Eagle*, his story is now reaching a new, younger audience and the Olympian has been busy visiting schools and universities, inspiring students with his never-say-die attitude. We talk to Eddie about how sport has transformed his life

Have you always been determined?

I've always loved proving people wrong. Since I was a boy, people were always telling me I couldn't do things.

In my life as a skier, the more people told me I couldn't do something, the more it inspired me to prove them wrong and I proved everybody wrong when I went to the Winter Olympics in Calgary.

What have been your enduring memories of the 1988 Games?

A memory that will never leave me is sitting on the bar, high on top of the 120m ski jump and there were 90,000 people in the arena, all chanting 'Eddie, Eddie'. It was such a special moment for me and even now 30 years later, it still makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end when I think about it.

How has having a strong mental attitude been a factor in your career?

In ski jumping, you can't have any doubts whatsoever. When you're sitting 550ft up, on the bar of a 120m jump,

you just want to jump the furthest you can. To achieve that, you will risk more than you've ever risked before.

If you get any part of the take-off sequence wrong, the consequences can be horrendous and if there's any doubt in your mind, that will magnify as you start to head off down the jump.

I've always had great self-belief and even now I still get just as excited when I put on a pair of skis as I did when I first started 40 years ago. I just love the sport and I was very lucky to find something that I was so passionate about.

What is your current involvement in the sport?

Although I'm no longer involved in British skiing, I still ski and continue to undertake promotions for various initiatives. I've worked with the Chill FactorE, the UK's longest indoor ski slope in Manchester, to encourage 6- to 18-year-olds into the sport. I've also supported Sport England and get involved in 20 to 30 talks a year, visiting



Chill FactorE encourages children to learn to ski



We don't have a ski jump or a ski jump centre in the UK, but I'd like to see us investing in home-grown talent

schools and universities to talk about the importance of never giving up and of following your sporting ambitions.

I'd like to see skiing become a more accessible sport. It seems very little has changed since I first started, so there needs to be far more investment in grassroots participation and it's an ideal time to start afresh.

Dry slopes and indoor slopes are great for getting more people involved, but it has to be affordable and more inclusive.

What would you do to ensure more people get involved in skiing at grassroots level?

We hear a lot about the Olympic legacy and I would love to see more people taking up the sport. In the UK, we don't have a ski jump or ski jump centre but it's something that I'd like to see in the future, so we can start investing in homegrown talent.

With the right facilities, I believe in 10 years, we would have some world-class ski jumpers and it's something I'm looking at getting involved in for the future.



Edwards in action at the 1988 Winter Olympics – his life has inspired a Hollywood film



Most individuals introduced to the programme are inactive and would otherwise never have entered a leisure centre or sports facility

LYNDESEY BARRETT • FOUNDER, SPORT FOR CONFIDENCE



Barrett's Sport for Confidence charity uses sport as a treatment tool

Why did you start Sport for Confidence?

As a senior occupational therapist with the NHS for 19 years, I was no longer willing to accept that traditional delivery methods – such as those employed by the NHS – are always the most effective way to achieve positive client outcomes on a large scale. So I decided to set up a social enterprise that places leisure activities at the heart of client interventions and uses sport and physical activity as an assessment and treatment tool.

Tell us more about the organisation

Sport for Confidence is open to all and is attracting individuals with a range of

disabilities including learning disabilities, mental health issues, Asperger's syndrome, autism, Down's syndrome and dementia.

Typically, most individuals introduced to Sport for Confidence are inactive and would never have entered a leisure or sports facility without this pathway.

Our ambition is to place an occupational therapist in every leisure centre in the UK to deliver programmes and to create positive, life changing outcomes on a national scale.

Sport and physical activity has so much to offer everybody, and a cross-sector, whole-system approach is needed if we are to deliver the wide-reaching positive outcomes achieved by regular participation.

Does Sport for Confidence partner with other organisations?

We've nurtured excellent working relationships with providers including Everyone Active, Fusion Lifestyle, GLL and Essex County Council. Each has integrated our programme into their offering.

We also offer education to venue staff, sharing our specialist knowledge to enable effective interactions with our attendees, who typically have a range of specialist communication needs.

We collaborate with a number of community groups, to ensure every individual in the community receives the support and help they need.

Does the programme change lives?

Across venues, we deliver more than 800 interventions every month, offering physical activities including boccia, new age kurling, swimming and trampolining.

Each of the sessions is attended and run by an occupational therapist and a sports coach, who work together to meet the needs of every individual.

In addition to the many physical and mental health benefits associated with physical activity, Sport for Confidence participants have recorded additional outcomes, such as independence in daily tasks, awareness of health issues, teamwork, self-expression, enhanced decision-making and self-confidence. ●



Participants in Sport for Confidence report improvements in communication skills

CHARLES LAWRENCE

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

FC Barcelona make headway in bid to build stadium district

FC Barcelona's ambitious plan to create a vibrant district dedicated to the club and its brand around a redeveloped Camp Nou stadium has been given the provisional green light by the city council.

An agreement between the club and the city was reached on 12 April, paving the way for a Modification to the General Metropolitan Plan (MPGM), which would allow the creation of Espai Barça, or 'Barça Space'.

The district will be a pedestrianised and landscaped boulevard for all things Barça. Blending into the districts of La Maternitat and Sant Ramon, it will integrate with



FC Barcelona plans to create a vibrant district

the city 24/7: a neighbourhood of restaurants, cafés, sports facilities and the club's museum and megastore. Hotels may also feature in the future.

The club hopes the result will be "every Barça fan's



Espai Barça won't be like an amusement park, it will have no fences

Jordi Moix

dream" – a place they can call their own which will increase the club's engagement with fans, its revenue and the value of its assets, boost sponsorship, improve conditions for its athletes, achieve environmental sustainability and generate activity 365 days a year.

The club's commissioner for the project, Jordi Moix, said: "This district will be an open space for everyone. We want to liberate this space for the neighbourhood. Espai Barça won't be like an amusement park where you have to pay to enter. We're a social club and we're part of this city"

More: http://lei.sr?a=n3v6j_P

Maria Sharapova and Dan Meis join forces for design venture

Tennis star Maria Sharapova has joined forces with US sports architect Dan Meis to start a new design venture creating "inspirational" health, fitness, sporting and wellness facilities for the hospitality sector.

Inspired, in part, by hotelier Ian Schrager's boutique hotel revolution, the pair are already in talks to create branded experience-led training venues for hotels, resorts and sports clubs that will help budding and professional athletes reach their peak performance.

They will provide design services, operational consultation and licensing advice for a wide range of facilities – from large-scale tennis resorts to



Sports architects don't always think about the players' perspectives of the venues

Dan Meis

individual hotel fitness rooms and spas focused on well-being and recovery from injury.

"The concept all goes back to an idea I had a few years ago," Meis told *Sports Management*. "And that is that while sports architects are really good at thinking about how sports venues affect the fan experience, we don't always think a lot about the players' perspectives on the venues.



Meis praised Sharapova for her sense of design and ideas

"I was following Maria on social media and I saw she had a really strong sense of design and ideas about architecture – so I reached out to collaborate."

Meis added the pair hope to have "one or two" projects underway by the end of this year.

More: http://lei.sr?a=F9G8j_P



The venue will host UMBC men's and women's basketball teams

New Baltimore basketball 'most advanced' in the US

The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) in the US has completed work on its new Event Center, designed as one of the most advanced college basketball facilities in the country.

The all-in-one athletics venue is the new home of the UMBC Retrievers' men's and women's basketball teams and women's volleyball squad.

Designed by architects CannonDesign to be flexible and multi-purpose in

nature, the stadium bowl has a capacity of 5,000.

The court can also be configured to create 1,000 additional seats on the floor for concerts, ceremonies, trade shows and other cultural and public events.

"As an anchor for UMBC's future, the Campus Event Center is both a destination and icon for the campus," said Roland Lemke, design principal at CannonDesign.

More: http://lei.sr?a=D4r3J_P



Urbnsurf will unlock the geographic limitations of surfing

Andrew Ross

Construction set to begin on Australia's first surf park

Work is set to begin on Australia's first surf park, after Urbnsurf – the company driving the plans – secured AUS\$28.3m (US\$18, €15m, £13m) in funding to develop a site in the city of Melbourne.

The firm has already secured planning consent for a site adjacent to Melbourne Airport and now expects construction work to begin

during April 2018. Described as a "sports, leisure and entertainment facility", Urbnsurf Melbourne will be centered around the surfing lagoon.

"Urbnsurf Melbourne will unlock the geographic limitations of surfing," said the company's founder and executive chair, Andrew Ross.

More: http://lei.sr?a=A4j2X_P

FC Nantes reveals proposed design for striking new stadium

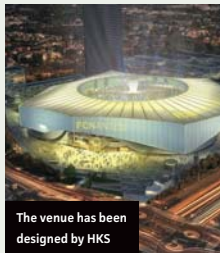


YelloPark is the realisation of a need expressed for several years

Nantes FC

French football club FC Nantes has revealed the first design sketches for its planned new 40,000-capacity home stadium in western France.

US sports architects HKS and French practice Atelier Tom Sheehan & Partenaires (ATSP) have created the concept for the YelloPark Stadium, which includes a fixed roof with a retractable oculus. The traditional horizontally stratified organisation of a stadium will be reinvented to create "a tailor-made experience for each



The venue has been designed by HKS

ticket category" – including different leisure amenities.

In a statement, the club said: "YelloPark is the realisation of a need expressed for several years for a stadium that meets the ambitions of FC Nantes, the city and its metropolis."

More: http://lei.sr?a=n6q5H_P

Paris Olympic organisers warned of €500m 'overspend'

A French government watchdog has warned that the cost of hosting the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games could run €500m (US\$615m, £438m) over budget, if "remedial action" isn't taken.

The report – compiled by the government's finance, sports and infrastructure inspectors – called for plans for the Olympic Village to be revised and proposals for

a media village and aquatics centre to be scaled back, with the cutbacks shaving up to €300m (US\$386m, £262m) from the total cost. Inspectors also called plans for the volleyball and badminton courts "abnormally expensive", predicting an overspend of around €50m (US\$61m, £44m) on a budget of €172m (US\$211m, £150m).

More: http://lei.sr?a=j4A4q_P



FUNDING WITH A TWIST

A group of entrepreneurs have launched a cryptocurrency-based crowdfunding platform, designed to match investors with athletes and sports organisations

A crowdfunding platform, based on transactions in cryptocurrency, is aiming to offer sports organisations, clubs and individual athletes an alternative way to raise investments and sponsorship.

SportyCo will look to match organisations with those happy to make long-term investments and the new platform is among the firsts to combine crowdfunding with a cryptocurrency.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the company said: "We are introducing a brand new industry of sports crowd micro-financing."

"Until SportyCo, only major conglomerates, corporations, and people commanding extensive amounts of capital were able to participate in the sports financing industry."

"SportyCo will turn the tables in this regard, giving the power of sports financing to the public – the fans and small investors."

"Each individual will have the opportunity to directly support an athlete or club of their choice, reaping the rewards of their success."

"In addition to simple donations, smart investment contracts will allow fans and



“

Professional sport today has a high entry barrier – both for athletes and small investors

Marko Filej

sports enthusiasts to invest directly into athletes, clubs, or other sports organizations, with the aim of possible future returns."

The platform will have two main modules: a cryptocurrency-based donations platform and a cryptocurrency financial reward-based platform.

The reward-based platform will offer athletes and sports organisations funding in return for a share of future profits.

Each crowdfunding campaign on SportyCo's platform will be listed in SPF Tokens – SportyCo's own cryptocurrency. The tokens will also be used to purchase additional services that SportyCo will provide to athletes, sports clubs, investors, and other participants in the ecosystem.

SPF Tokens can currently be purchased on a number of cryptocurrency exchanges – including HitBTC, Livecoin, OKEx and ChaoEX.

SportyCo was founded by three entrepreneurs – Marko Filej, Simon Zgavec and Tomas Cepon.

Filej is founder of the online fitness service OnlineGym4me.com, which he launched in partnership with tennis star Ana Ivanovic. Zgavec is a practicing lawyer and Cepon has a sales background.

Filej said: "Professional sport today has a high entry barrier – both for athletes and small investors. Especially up-and-coming athletes at the outset of their professional careers face a lot of issues related to funding their training and participation in events across the globe."

More: http://lei.sr?a=G9T5J_P

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NEWS + ANALYSIS



Khan would pay around £600m for the stadium



The deal would allow the FA to focus on its mission of developing players

Shahid Khan

FA confirms plans to sell Wembley to Fulham owner Khan

The Football Association (FA) has confirmed that it's considering selling England's national stadium, Wembley, to entrepreneur Shahid Khan.

It is understood Khan – the owner of Fulham Football Club and the Jacksonville Jaguars NFL franchise – would pay around £600m for the stadium, while the FA would continue to run the Club

Wembley hospitality business.

Khan also confirmed the plans, saying that the stadium would act as the "London home" for the Jaguars – and that there were no plans to relocate Fulham FC from its current Craven Cottage stadium.

The Jaguars have played regular season home games at Wembley Stadium in each of the past five NFL seasons – as part

of the NFL London series – and will continue to do so at least through the 2020 season.

"The games the Jaguars play at Wembley are essential to the financial stability of the Jaguars in Jacksonville, which is one of the smallest markets in the NFL," Khan said.

"If the deal is successful, Wembley Stadium would return to private ownership and The

Football Association would be able to focus on its core mission of developing players with the best player developers and facilities anywhere in the game, thanks in part to the vast financial benefit that would result from the transaction."

Opened in 2007, the 90,000-seat stadium cost around to build.

More: http://lei.sr?a=j9d9h_P

ANALYSIS

To sell or to stay put – Wembley plan gets the nation talking



Announcing plans on how the money would be spent could help convince critics

Chris Trickey, CEO, SAPCA

When news broke that the FA was considering selling Wembley Stadium to a US billionaire, the backlash was immediate. Social media platforms were filled with dismayed fans and a number of high-profile critics made their feelings known.

Former Chelsea owner Ken Bates urged fans to organise mass protests and former England defender Gary Neville described the plans as 'bizarre'. Even Downing Street waded into the debate – Theresa May's

spokesperson urging the FA to "strongly consider the views of England supporters" before deciding on a possible sale.

While it is understandable that fans are uneasy at the thought of the national stadium being privately owned, there is a rationale behind the plans.

The FA says the windfall from the sale would be pumped into grassroots football – and we all know that investment is badly needed in improving facilities. Among the projects to

benefit could be the FA's Parklife programme, which aims to revolutionise grassroots by building football hubs across England

The sale of Wembley would also release the FA of a financial burden. For years, the FA has cited "paying for Wembley" as a factor limiting investment in grassroots.

It is right to approach any deal to sell with caution, so announcing clear plans on how the money would be invested could help convince critics.



The plan was to create an area with 3,500 rail seats

Government turns down proposal for safe standing

Premier League football club West Bromwich Albion (WBA) has had its proposal to establish a safe standing area at The Hawthorns stadium rejected by the government.

The pilot scheme would have seen around 3,500 seats being converted to rail seats – a system which allows seats to be locked in an upright position, creating a standing area.

The club was hoping to install the rail seating in time for the 2018-19 season.

Sports minister Tracey Crouch, however, has ruled out



I think the minister has taken a short-sighted view
Mark Miles

the idea, saying there are no plans to change the all-seater policy at football stadia.

The decision was described as both “surprising” and “disappointing” by WBA’s director of operations Mark Miles.

“The minister has taken a short-sighted view,” Miles said.

More: http://lei.sr?a=u9a2C_P

Sport England updates planning development guidance

Sport England has updated and relaunched its guidance on playing fields planning applications, with the aim of further protecting the public spaces in which people get physically active.

It is the first major update to the *Playing Fields Policy and Guidance* since it was first published in 1997, when planning authorities were first made to consult Sport England on development

applications which affect playing field land.

“By providing clearer and more detailed advice, the updated guidance will help applicants, local planning authorities and other parties understand our role and how we assess applications, along with the information we require,” said Sport England’s property director Charles Johnston.

More: http://lei.sr?a=b9E7s_P



This decision recognises the wider benefits that a stadium will offer
Bob Egerton

Stadium for Cornwall a step closer after £3m council funding boost

A stadium which would provide a new home for the Cornish Pirates rugby club is a step closer to being built after Cornwall Council agreed a £3m funding package for the £14.3m project.

Planning permission for the 6,000-capacity, multi-sport Stadium for Cornwall has already been granted in Threemilestone near Truro.

As well as a home for the Pirates, the stadium will also host Truro City Football Club and a wide range of regional events.

Bob Egerton, Cornwall Council cabinet member for planning, said: “This decision recognises the wider benefits that a Stadium for Cornwall will bring.”

More: http://lei.sr?a=U6T4g_P



Tanni Grey-Thompson launched the consultation in April

Consultation launched on children’s health and activity

A major new consultation aiming to shape the future of children’s physical activity across the UK has been launched by not-for-profit health body Uactive.

The consultation will focus on developing opportunities in three key areas – the organisations and institutions that children and young people experience; the physical environment that children

and young people grow up in; and the social environment that children interact with.

Uactive chair, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, has called for anyone involved in children’s fitness to take part – from health experts, activity providers, government stakeholders and education professionals to parents and children themselves.

More: http://lei.sr?a=2U5a3g_P



ECB is looking to introduce the new format for its city-based tournament in 2020

New format for ECB's franchised league

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) proposes 100-ball format for city-based competition in order to draw in families for evening games

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has revealed it is looking to introduce a '100 balls' format into its new eight-team, city-based tournament...

Further shortening the current "T20" format of 20 overs for each innings, the new concept would see teams face 15 traditional six-ball overs and a final 10-ball over.

Designed to cut the length of each match to around two and a half hours, the move is designed to attract more families with younger children to attend evening games – as well as make the matches even more "broadcast-friendly".

Currently, a typical T20 match is completed in just over three hours. The new format is set to be introduced in 2020, when ECB launches its new city-based tournament, featuring franchise-style teams in Southampton, Birmingham, Leeds, London, Manchester, Cardiff and Nottingham.

Tom Harrison, ECB chief executive, said: "This is a fresh and exciting idea which will appeal to a younger audience



This is a fresh and exciting idea which will appeal to a younger audience

Tom Harrison

and attract new fans to the game.

"Throughout its development, we have shown leadership, provided challenge and followed a process. We will continue to do that as the concept evolves.

"There are 18 First Class Counties, playing red and white ball cricket, at our core and these counties will be supported, promoted and benefit from the game's growth."

ECB's chief commercial officer Sanjay Patel has been named managing director of the new competition.

"The development team has had strong support and encouragement in its conversations to date and it's time to take the concept wider as we build the detail," Patel said.

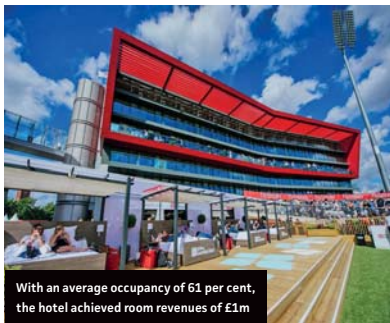
"Crucially, this will also help differentiate this competition from Vitality Blast and other T20 competitions worldwide, maintaining our game's history of successful innovation.

"The players and our valuable broadcast partners under the new TV partnerships from 2020-24 are vital to the success of this competition."

The plans to dispense with the proven T20 format and introduce "The Hundred" structure is seen as a huge surprise.

Reception to it hasn't been universally positive, either. Writing in the *former* England spinner Vic Marks called the format a "gimmick likely to kill off the County Championship".

More: http://lei.sr?a=S6Q3D_P



With an average occupancy of 61 per cent, the hotel achieved room revenues of £1m

Hotel helps push profits up by 92 per cent at Lancashire CCC

The opening of a new hotel at its Old Trafford ground has helped Lancashire County Cricket Club (LCCC) post a 92 per cent increase in full-year profits.

LCCC opened a 150-bedroom Hilton Garden Inn at the end of August 2017 and the hotel "exceeded expectations" in its first four months of trading.

With an average occupancy of 61 per cent, the hotel achieved room revenues

of £1m, with average daily room rates hitting £92.

The hotel's performance helped LCCC post an operating profit of £2,347,000 for the year ending 31 December 2017.

The opening of the hotel has also revitalised the club's events business.

"Following the opening of the new hotel, we saw a significant uplift in conference business," the club said in a statement.

More: http://lei.sr?a=m6z9s_P

£50m Communities Strategy fund an 'opportunity' for sport

The government's new *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* could present a funding opportunity for the UK's sports clubs.

Published by the secretary of state for communities Sajid Javid, the green paper sets out the government's proposals to build "strong, integrated communities where people live work and socialise together".

The strategy is supported by £50m worth of funding, which will focus on schemes that improve community relations.

Sports clubs could be among the beneficiaries, as the strategy explicitly recognises the value of sport and recreation in bringing communities together.

More: http://lei.sr?a=j9x7h_P



I've become concerned the standards of governance are falling short
Andy Nash

ECB director Andy Nash resigns over Test-county payments

Andy Nash has resigned from his role as a director of The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), after accusing the national governing body of bias in the way it treats the 18 First Class counties.

Nash, who had been tipped as a potential successor to current ECB chair Colin Graves, resigned as a protest to allegations – published by The Times last week – that the eight Test-hosting counties would

receive payments in years they do not host Tests matches.

According to Nash, offering payments to the owners of Test grounds even when they don't host matches would further disadvantage the 10 non-Test hosting clubs and create an uneven playing field.

"I've become concerned the standards of corporate governance at ECB are falling short of what's acceptable," Nash said.

More: http://lei.sr?a=w5p8Z_P

Norwich City launches 'mini-bond' for fans to fund academy



Developing the academy is a vital part of our long-term strategy
Steve Stone

Norwich City Football Club (NCFC) has launched a £3.5m Canaries mini-bond to fund a new high-performance Academy – giving supporters the chance to directly invest in the club's future.

The money raised by the five-year bond, which has a maximum £5m threshold, will be ring-fenced to ensure it is invested in facilities at the club's training ground in Colney. NCFC's managing director Steve Stone said the

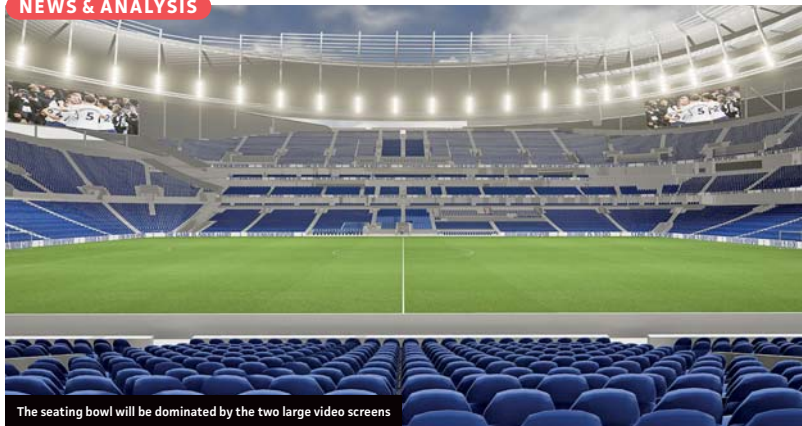


The fund will improve the club's youth set up

initiative is part of a long-term strategy to produce more home-grown players and to build a sustainable future for the club.

"Developing the academy is a vital part of our long-term strategy and will secure your youth set up," Stone said.

More: http://lei.sr?a=n9j9K_P



Spurs reveals further stadium details

Premier League club unveils new images of "next generation video screens" and announces plastic-reducing measures for future stadium

New images of Tottenham Hotspur's forthcoming White Hart Lane stadium, currently under construction in north London, show the scale of the four huge display screens which will dominate the stadium's seating bowl.

Supplied by AV specialist Daktronics, the four bespoke main LED video displays will total more than 1,000sq m in size.

This includes two screens in the single tier, 17,500-capacity South Stand, each measuring 325sq m – making them the largest screens in any stadium in Europe and among the biggest in the world.

Two additional screens in the North Stand will each measure 190.7 square metres, while two LED video displays will feature on the South West and South East façades, each measuring 178.9 square metres.

Every main display will feature 13HD pixel layouts.

The stadium bowl will also include three tiers of digital ribbon – a first for any European stadium.



“

As a club we have always taken our responsibility to care for our environment seriously

Daniel Levy

The upper and middle tier ribbons will run from the East to West Stands through the North Stand, measuring 387m and 348m long respectively, while the suite-tier ribbon will be split into two runs along the East and West Stands, measuring 122m long on the East Stand and 105m long on the West.

Matthew Collecott, director of operations at Tottenham Hotspur, said: "We have pushed Daktronics to deliver something that

will truly set us apart and these installations will play a significant role as part of our commitment to setting a new standard in fan experience in sports and entertainment."

The club also announced its commitment to phasing out single-use plastics across all club operations at the new stadium.

There will be no plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery or any plastic disposable packaging used at the stadium, while all new supplier contracts will include a requirement to reduce single-use plastics.

Chair Daniel Levy said: "As a club we have always taken our responsibility to care for our environment seriously. We have demonstrated this with the environmentally sensitive development of our Training Centre, where we have preserved historic hedgerows and planted for the future and which will see us adding an Environmental Centre and Nature Reserve there too. Another first by the Club.

"We shall now be bringing our values to the new stadium to both play our part in the reduction of single-use plastics."

More: http://lei.sr?a=W5k4s_P



The funding will target existing clubs

Funding scheme to help retain men in grassroots football

A new funding scheme has been launched to aid the retention of adult male teams within grassroots football clubs.

The £1m Retain the Game fund will be distributed via the Football Foundation and has been created to tackle a decrease in the number of adult male FA-affiliated grassroots league teams in England.

Introduced this month, the programme will offer existing grassroots football clubs grants to continue

offering playing opportunities in organised football.

The funding is designed to cover core costs, such as matchday and training facility hire as well as first aid training.

Aidy Boothroyd, England Under-21s manager, said: "Adult male grassroots football is a fundamental part of the game and financial support provided through this scheme will have a fantastic impact ensuring high levels of participation."

More: http://lei.sr?a=2j9j8_P



Success of the FA Women's Premier League has contributed to the increase

Attendances for women's elite sport set to break 500,000

The number of spectators attending women's elite sports events in the UK is set to break the half-million barrier for the first time in 2018.

According to data analysis by sports marketing specialist Two Circles, the number of fans watching women's sport will hit 682,000 this year – an increase of 49 per cent on 2017 figures. The report is the latest

indication that women's sport is currently experiencing a huge surge in popularity.

According to Two Circles, the growth has been driven by a increase in media coverage and awareness of women's sport – as well as the success of recent major international tournaments hosted on UK soil.

More: http://lei.sr?a=x3R6R_P

Crystal Palace's stadium revamp designs approved

We will transform the stadium and positively impact South London
Steve Parish

Premier League club Crystal Palace has been given the green light to build an "iconic" new Main Stand at its Selhurst Park home, after Croydon Council resolved to grant permission for the project.

Sports architects KSS are overseeing the project, with their design vision first revealed in December last year. The club looks to increase the capacity at the ground from 26,000 to more than 34,000, at a cost of between £75m to £100m.



The project will include a new main stand

Crystal Palace chair Steve Parish said: "This project will not only transform the stadium, which has been our home since 1924, but it will also have a positive impact on the south London community."

More: http://lei.sr?a=c8D3A_P

Leicester City FC reveals expansion plans for King Power

Leicester City FC has revealed plans to increase capacity and improve facilities at its King Power stadium.

In a statement, the club's vice chair, Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, said the club is also looking to undertake "significant investment" in the stadium's surrounding areas.

"We are now in a position to begin a more thorough

consultation on the development of King Power Stadium," Srivaddhanaprabha said.

"The plan is to increase capacity and upgrade facilities for the stadium itself, and invest in the surrounding site to create an exciting events destination for the city of Leicester.

"We are only in the very early stages, but it's exciting news."

More: http://lei.sr?a=G9W7D_P

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CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Rather than producing endless reports that sing the praises of physical activity, we need to improve the way we present this evidence to government, says Andy Reed

Reports are launched regularly showing that physical activity is good for us, is cost effective and would save the nation billions. So why are so few policy makers listening to this message?

At the Sports Think Tank we receive reports, evidence, brochures and academic reports daily. But rather than producing report after report that all say the same thing, perhaps we need to work out whether they are making the right impact.

How much systematic change has actually been embedded in policy making as a result of these reports? We know the answer is not a lot. The isolated pockets of good practise remain small and insignificant. In many cases, such as in schools, we are going backwards.

A unified message

We have to remember, of course, that we are not lobbying in a vacuum. Other interests are rightly making their cases too for the limited investment available.

There is so much to be gained by unifying our message and realising that we all have a role to play in this massive task. I am afraid that too often, individual sectors believe they alone hold the solution. Can we be really honest and say there aren't lots of different avenues to getting the nation more active?

But we continue to mix our messages. Too many still talk about sport and physical activity and obesity in the same breath. A physical activity strategy isn't about tackling obesity – far more of that battle will be won by tackling diet and nutrition. Physical activity is



We know that physical activity is good for us, but are we convincing government?



We talk about saving the NHS billions, but there are many conflicting figures. Do these figures have any practical meaning?

a public good and ukactive has been good at making sure we focus on that.

Better evidence

We talk about saving the NHS billions, but even here I have seen so many conflicting figures – from £2bn a year to £50bn a year by 2050. Do these figures have any practical meaning to an NHS that's struggling to get A&E patients through its doors?

We also need much smarter, deeper

analysis and evidence. What counts as 'evidence' is all too often created in isolation compared to other investments the government could make – even if it had the money.

But just as crucially, we then need to have a consistent and long-term approach to our messaging and advocacy into government. It's time to learn how to unify as a sector and work much harder on our collective lobbying.

Let's stop gathering backslapping reports and concentrate on effectively changing government policy and the public attitude to physical activity. Let's create a movement that will gain attention outside our own sector. ●

Andy Reed is the founder of Sports Think Tank, former MP for Loughborough, and chair of SAPCA sportsthinktank.com

LAWRENCE DALLAGLIO'S RUGBYWORKS

Following a stellar rugby career, Lawrence Dallaglio set up Dallaglio RugbyWorks, using the principles of the sport to help troubled young people change their lives. He talks to **Steph Eaves** about why he's so passionate about giving these kids a second chance



Rugby gave my life purpose," says Lawrence Dallaglio, former captain of the English rugby union team and 2016 inductee of the World Rugby Hall of Fame. "It has the power to transform attitudes, behaviours and aspirations. Rugby helped me overcome a very turbulent time in my life."

Dallaglio is explaining why in 2009, following his retirement, he decided to set up Dallaglio RugbyWorks, a programme

that utilises the sport to help change the lives of 14- to 17-year-olds who, due to issues such as difficult behaviour, school refusal or teenage pregnancy, have been excluded from mainstream education.

"One of my great beliefs is that you are what you're exposed to," says Dallaglio. "This is something we channel through the programme, providing life-changing opportunities for young people."

RugbyWorks partners with over 40 alternative provision (AP) schools across

the country, giving disengaged young people the support, experience and abilities needed to help them believe in a better future for themselves.

Dallaglio describes the programme as a long-term, intensive skills development programme, based on the values of rugby. The end goal is for participants to enter sustained education, training or employment after they leave school.

"While we use rugby to draw in the young people, we intend the rugby sessions to develop their soft skills, increase their engagement with the school and guide them onto a suitable career path," he says.

"We're not trying to create rugby players of the future, rather, we're instilling in them the values of the game – teamwork, respect and leadership."

From personal experience

Dallaglio knows first hand how rugby can help during difficult times. In 1989, when he was 16 years old, his older sister Francesca was killed in the Marchioness disaster.

"Francesca's death blew my family apart," he says. "We were a very close-knit family and it was a terrible time."



The coach-participant relationship is an important part of the RugbyWorks offer



We're not trying to create rugby players of the future, we're instilling in them the values of the game – teamwork, respect and leadership

Former rugby player
Lawrence Dallaglio set up
RugbyWorks in 2009

Dallaglio says that before the tragedy, he certainly wasn't destined to play for England and wasn't even in the First XV at school, but in the wake of his sister's death, he became a "man on a mission."

"Rugby gave me a purpose, something to focus on. I became quite driven, because I knew I had to do something that would bring my family together."

"Most importantly, playing rugby has given me a solid group of friends that will stay with me for life."

A few years after the tragedy, Dallaglio was invited for a trial with the London Wasps team, the club he would end up representing for the entirety of his career. ▶

RUGBYWORKS' SUCCESS IN NUMBERS

18% of 2016 RugbyWorks school leavers secured an apprenticeship, against a national backdrop of just 6% of apprenticeship applicants in mainstream education.

68% of RugbyWorks participants are still in sustained education, employment or training 12 months after leaving school, compared to 50% from alternative provision schools nationally after 6 months.

On average, **9%** of participants achieve Level 2 English and Maths, compared to 3% of students in alternative provision schools nationally.

The feeling of running out to 80,000 fans at Twickenham will never leave me, but when it came to retirement I was excited by the transition

► "No one knew me," he says of starting with the Wasps. "No one knew about my past. It was a chance for me to move on and start a new chapter. It was a very friendly place and I became part of another family.

"That's when my rugby journey really took off. Five years later the game turned professional and it went from being a hobby to a career. I never in my wildest dreams imagined that's the way it would go."

Glory days

Over the course of his career Dallaglio achieved more than most players could dream of, including reaching the pinnacle of the sport in 2003, when England beat Australia to win the Rugby World Cup.

"The build up to that tournament was a very special time. We'd beaten the big three South African sides in the 2002 Autumn Internationals and then went on to win the Six Nations Grand Slam in the spring," says Dallaglio. "It was a magical time for English rugby and it was an honour to be part of it."

But despite all his success, when it came time to retire Dallaglio felt ready to embrace new opportunities.

"The feeling of running out to 80,000 fans at Twickenham with my teammates will never leave me, but when it came to retirement I was quite excited by the transition," he explains. "Rugby was very kind to me and I had a brilliant time. But you have to sacrifice a huge amount and so did the people around me.

"Once I retired, I was able to dedicate more time to my family, who had

supported me throughout my career. I was able to move into the media and talk about the sport that gave me so much. I was also able to set up Dallaglio RugbyWorks and give back to young people who just need a second chance."

Changing lives

The RugbyWorks programme is run as a free service for AP schools, which cater to students who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Working with young people in years 10 and 11, the team builds long-term relationships with groups of around eight to 10 individuals per school. Participants engage in the rugby sessions for 30 weeks per year over three years.



Dallaglio helped take the Wasps to victory in the Guinness Premiership in 2008

The programme is open to both boys and girls, however Dallaglio says that due to the nature of AP schools, the large majority are boys. RugbyWorks coaches work with teachers, as well as watching which students engage well in a series of taster sessions, to determine who will take part.

As well as school-based rugby sessions, Dallaglio says that tournaments are held in the various regions, and a national tournament is held yearly.

"It's great to see the healthy competition amongst the young people, as AP schools don't usually offer competitive inter-school sport," he tells.

Employability Taster days are also offered by the programme's corporate

The programme brings young people together to form a supportive community



We recognise the important role of the coach athlete relationship as a key catalyst to changing a young person's future prospects

partners, to give the young people a taste of the sort of jobs they could do when they leave school.

"In mainstream education, young people have better access to careers advice and work experience opportunities," says Dallaglio. "The young people we work with don't have these opportunities, so we engage our corporate partners to open their offices to them. Our aim is for the students to aspire to a life outside of their AP school."

Coaching self belief

While Dallaglio's passion project began simply as a grant giving charity, he soon saw the value of using sport to help young people change their lives,

and in 2014 the full programme was launched. Of particular importance to the programme's success, Dallaglio notes, is the coach-athlete relationship.

"We recognise the important, transformative role that this relationship can have. We see it as a key catalyst to changing the future prospects of each young person.

For this reason, our coaches are deeply embedded in the school community."

This relationship is so integral to a young person's continued success that the programme was lengthened from a two-year to a three-year programme in 2016, to enable the coaches to continue working with the participants after they have left their AP schools.

"When leaving the AP school environment and re-entering the so-called 'mainstream', they are at their most vulnerable," Dallaglio explains. "Our coaches now continue to support them in the college course or apprenticeship they go on to do after leaving the school.

"We also bring our third-year participants together for mini touch rugby tournaments, as once young people leave school, many stop physical activity. These sessions create a community for our young people, which has been so lovely to witness."

Evidence for sport

The RugbyWorks programme has already shown that it can make a difference. ▶



Dallaglio strongly believes in the power of sport to help instil confidence in young people

- Early results have found that 9 per cent of RugbyWorks participants achieve at least a Level 2 in Maths and English compared to 3 per cent of their peers in AP schools. Eighteen per cent of 2016 RugbyWorks school leavers secured an apprenticeship, compared to just 6 per cent of apprenticeship applicants in mainstream education nationally. Teachers also report increased attendance at school.

Twelve months after participants leave their AP schools, 68 per cent are still in sustained education, employment or

I get to see first-hand how the programme is helping these young people. Interacting with them and watching their outlook on life change is fantastic

training, indicating that the benefits of the programme are lasting.

Buoyed by these positive results, Dallaglio has called for more physical activity to be added to the National Curriculum and for Ofsted to rate schools on their physical activity programmes as well as academic results.

"According to Cancer Research UK, millennials are set to overtake baby boomers as the age group with the highest proportion of overweight or obese people," Dallaglio explains.

"With schools cutting more and more of the time spent on PE due to exam pressures, this statistic will continue to be given to the generations to come."

He continues: "Apart from the health benefits, I'm of the opinion that participating in sport leads to increased academic performance, rather than decreased. This can be seen in the results we're producing at RugbyWorks."

A continuing passion

Dallaglio clearly believes in what he's doing, and remains closely involved.

"Myself and all the trustees of the charity get to see first-hand the impact of the programme and how it's helping these young people. I very much enjoy going down to sessions and seeing the hard work our coaching team puts in. I get stuck in as well, no watching from the sidelines!

"Interacting with the young people and watching their outlook on life change is fantastic. I was very moved recently when one young lad wrote me a heartwarming letter thanking me for turning his life around. I felt like a proud father, it was a very humbling moment!" ●

If you would like to find out more about Dallaglio RugbyWorks please contact:
chris@dallagiorugbyworks.com



Coaches continue to support participants after they finish school

A young boy and girl are smiling and standing by a swimming pool. The boy is wearing green goggles and blue shorts. The girl is wearing a pink and blue heart-patterned swimsuit and has her goggles on her head. In the background, there are three heart-shaped photo cutouts showing the same children in different swimwear and pool settings. The top left corner features a stylized logo for 'THE NEPTUNE NAUTICALS' with a large arrow pointing right.

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Councils and contractors are having to find more creative ways to fund facilities

Are councils asking too much of contract operators?

As a number of large sport and leisure contracts come up for renewal and with councils putting ever more pressure on operators, we ask whether councils are heading into dangerous territory by being too demanding

Local government leisure contracting is running into some interesting challenges as we head into the fourth decade of management contracts.

From a naive beginning in the late 80s with Compulsory Competitive Tendering, contracting has matured as a sector and now boasts a roster of serious players with vast operational expertise.

But do too many councils expect operators to step up and make the numbers add up for them, while putting pressure on them to perform? And if so, are the cracks starting to show?

Faced with the choice between signing up for an onerous 25 year contract, during which the council will expect escalating fees and the alternative – the freedom to compete on the open market



Why pay a management fee to a council when you can start your own business right over the road?

– some operators are privately suggesting their management contracting days are numbered.

Why pay a penalty to a council for the right to operate a facility

you can never own, when for far less investment, you can start your own business right over the road with no constraints.

If councils push too hard, they may spawn a whole new raft of competition, as management contractors throw in the towel and decide to compete instead.

And with only two main revenue streams – swim lessons and gym memberships, that competition would hurt badly.



Councils expect contractors to use gym income to subsidise other services

CHRIS MARRIOTT

Director, The Sports Consultancy

Local authorities could well be looking back on the last two to three years as somewhat of a golden period for them in terms of getting new sports and leisure centres built and funded.

Low rates of borrowing, combined with a very competitive operator market have made these new schemes affordable.

Some have questioned the sustainability of these "good times" given just how aggressively some of the operators have been bidding



The more restrictions councils place on a contract, the more it will cost them. Simple as that

for the management contracts. We may well start to see some operators pull back a little now as they consolidate some of the contracts they've been winning, focusing on making sure they achieve those management fees they have committed to.

In the meantime, we're starting to see some local authorities coming to the market being over-ambitious about what management fee they expect to achieve for their contract, perhaps influenced by conversations with a

neighbouring authority which might have secured a stellar deal. However, when assessing the likelihood of getting a decent management fee, they need to take into consideration lots of different factors, such as whether the council is wanting to protect prices, whether it wants to protect various user groups and clubs, the split of maintenance responsibilities, etc. The more restrictions they place on a contract, the more it will cost them. Simple as that. They cannot have it all. ▶

STEVE BAMBURY

Commercial director, 1Life

Over the past 10 years, the financial expectations placed on operators have increased significantly.

This is generally seen in either a considerably reduced fee for the operator's services or a requirement for operators to pay a fee to the authority.

Increasing utility costs have created additional financial pressure when it comes to the performance of local facilities, while rising living costs and the growth of private sector 'value' offerings mean the customer is now expecting more for less.

Despite these pressures, councils still wish to maintain a significant interest in the operation of facilities, from programming and staffing



The private market provides a great opportunity for operators to concentrate on their key strengths without the constraints of local authority buildings and contracts



Some management contractors are moving into the private sector

through to core pricing and opening times. This often results in the local leisure centre not being on an even playing field with the competition from the private market, and this hampers the profitability of contracts.

A vast number of operators have already tested the private market in recent years, trying to find a niche that will ensure they're less reliant on the local

authority business. I think we'll see some ringfencing their local authority operations completely, while most will be more selective in the contracts they bid for.

The private market provides great opportunities for operators to concentrate on their key strengths without the constraints of local authority buildings and contracts, allowing them to maximise their success.

PETER GUNN

Chief executive, BH Live

The open tender process can fall down when evaluation isn't robust enough to identify clear gaps.

External consultants have a role to play in this process, by ensuring operators aren't tempted to promise big savings simply because this is what councils want to hear.

Council contracts continue to be attractive, as most quality facilities are in public ownership. Certainly for us, as a social enterprise and registered charity, this is the most effective way of delivering our broader objectives – increasing

participation and promoting the benefits of physical activity.

Profit isn't the main motive, and I hope councils see the benefit of working with organisations which have shared goals.

If contracts are constructed correctly, with this shared ethos, there's no reason why profit cannot flow from this. The difference for us is that all profits are reinvested into services and not distributed to shareholders. Either way, there can continue to be a 'win-win' for all involved.

However, it's also important to diversify and not fall into the trap of entering into contracts

that aren't sustainable for either party and may have a relatively short tenure. For example, BH Live has set out to develop a small number of significant strategic partnerships with councils, based on long-term contracts covering theatre, conferencing, sport and leisure.

We also operate an event ticket agency, have JVs in catering and direct relationships with landlords for standalone gyms, to create commercial income streams to support our social objectives and allow us to invest more in the public sector facilities we operate.



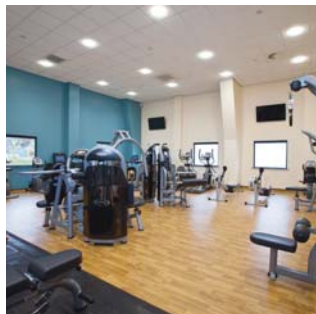
Profit is not the main motive, and I would hope councils see the benefit of working with organisations which have shared goals



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JUSTIN JARDINE Associate director, GLL

GLL wants sport, leisure and wellbeing to be affordable and accessible for everyone in the community, achieving the mantra of 'More People, More Active, More Often'. The current public sector leisure market is at a watershed moment in its efforts to achieve this goal.

We have to accept that the market is under increasing strain. Councils are facing significant financial pressure to deliver savings, and the market has become extremely competitive,

due to the proliferation of low-cost gym operators.

Councils must ensure they're getting best value for their services, but this shouldn't be to the detriment of the social good which public services are there to provide for the public.

Leisure operators are already being very selective about the contracts they tender for due to a number of market factors, including reduced margins and over-ambitious starting points by councils and their advisors. However, many forward-thinking

councils have decided to invest in their portfolios and set affordability thresholds in tenders that are realistic and achievable for operators, whilst protecting the important social value of those services.

Organisations, such as GLL, that predicted this shift in the market, have already diversified their business into services.

Our view is that this situation will persist until the public sector leisure market both consolidates and corrects itself over the next few years.



The market has become extremely competitive due to the proliferation of low-cost gym operators

JOHN BATES Director, Places for People Leisure

Places for People Leisure is aware that some local authorities are transferring an unacceptable level of risk to the leisure operator when outsourcing their leisure facilities.

The Sport England template that was established for use in the industry, which represents

fair and equitable terms for both the council and the operator, is being excessively varied in some instances. This includes the removal of utility benchmarking and income benchmarking from the Benchmarking Schedule, which forces the operator to take full risk in both of these

potentially volatile areas.

As a consequence, there's likely to be a reduction in contractor appetite and, therefore, diminished competition.

We continue to look at opportunities in the local government outsourcing sector but also in the private sector,

where shorter-term leases without the constraints of pricing controls and programming requirements can be more attractive than long-term leisure management contracts, which may have a greater risk profile.



Operators are being asked to take all risk on utility bills, leaving them very exposed



The Sport England template, which represents fair and equitable terms for both council and operator, is being excessively varied in some instances

If councils want a return,
then facilities have to match
those in the private sector



PHOTO: WILLOW DOWN

DUNCAN JEFFORD Regional director, Everyone Active

Leisure is not a statutory service. Local authorities up and down the country are having to move from what was traditionally a service that cost money to one that generates revenue. And to do this, in the majority of cases, operators are now paying a managing fee to run the facility, rather than the operator receiving a managing fee.

I don't think that councils are putting too much pressure on operators, however, they are asking for a bigger and bigger management fee from

operators. There's a frustration from an operator's point of view, because we're paying that management fee but we don't necessarily have freedom on pricing and programming.

Unless we get real freedom in this area, we can't always hit the level of income that the council is looking for under the contract.

As an operator, we're not going to move away from council contracts. In fact, we think the local authority market is as buoyant as it's ever been. But if councils want a bigger return, then the quality of



The more freedom we have over the pricing and programming, the better position we'll be in to pay the council more money

facilities needs to be as good as it's ever been, because it's got to compete with the private sector. And secondly, we need to be given real freedom – the more freedom we have over the pricing and programming, the better position we'll be in to pay councils more money. ●

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you have an opinion or new thoughts to add to the debate about council contracting, write to editorial@leisuremedia.com

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Twenty million people in the UK have a long term disability or illness. Nearly half of these people are physically inactive. In the first of this three part series, we explore what operators could be doing to welcome disabled guests



PTs should have the knowledge to adapt exercises for their clients needs

© INCLUSIVE FITNESS INITIATIVE

Some people have a mental health condition they aren't comfortable talking about," says Dawn Hughes, national partnerships advisor for Activity Alliance, which has been supporting sport and leisure facilities to be more welcoming and accessible to disabled people for more than 10 years through its Inclusive Fitness Initiative 'IFI Mark' scheme.

"Many more people classify their disability as simply 'getting old'. So it's likely the number that actually declare themselves as having a disability massively underestimates the true figures.

"What's more, we know that seven in ten disabled people want to be more active, but feel facilities aren't doing enough to highlight what's on offer for them."

But that's not the only issue according to Caroline Constantine, managing director of specialist quality management company, Right Directions, which delivers the IFI Mark accreditation. "Psychological barriers play the biggest role in preventing disabled people from taking part in sport. Their perception of their own abilities matters, as well as others' opinions on whether the activity suits them. So the industry has a lot of work

Seven in ten disabled people want to be more active, but feel facilities aren't doing enough

– Dawn Hughes, Activity Alliance



to do to break down these barriers. Not only in how they prepare their facilities, but most significantly around how their staff interact with disabled visitors."

That's why, last year, Activity Alliance teamed up with Right Directions to deliver its IFI Mark accreditation. Under the partnership, Right Directions facilitates the IFI award either on its own or as part of Sport England's quality assurance and continuing development programme, Quest.

"The partnership is a win-win for everyone involved," says Constantine. "Operators taking part in Quest no longer have to pay for a separate award to demonstrate their inclusive credentials, while Activity Alliance can reach and support a wider range of facilities and organisations that want to include disabled people more effectively."



© SHUTTERSTOCK/IRON1120

The industry must work to break down psychological barriers that prevent people with disabilities from getting active

Making the change

Key themes highlighted within the Quest module look at how you ensure your workforce is equipped to deliver inclusive services to disabled customers. Whether workforce diversity and development is driven by customer needs and local priorities and whether inclusion and diversity is proactively reflected in the recruitment and selection of the workforce across all levels. Elements such as venue and equipment accessibility and the measurement of the impact and outcomes for disabled visitors are also covered.

"It's all very well having an accessible entrance and a lift, but does your organisation have a totally inclusive ethos?" says Hughes. "Operators need to take a whole organisation approach, from the boardroom to shop floor, so that when making decisions they are not just ticking boxes, but have inclusion at the heart of their thinking."

Inclusive recruitment is one element. What messages do you give to people who are thinking about joining your company? Is it easy for a disabled person to see they're welcome to apply for a position?

"Having a workforce diversity plan is a good start," says Constantine. "Very often it's not that operators

Operators need to take a whole organisation approach, so that they have inclusion at the heart of their thinking

– Caroline Constantine, Right Directions



Caroline Constantine
is managing director
of Right Directions

don't support diversity, they just don't have a plan or a systematic approach. In fact, they may already be employing staff with disabilities or long term health conditions they've not been informed of."

The Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Confident scheme recognises employers who aim to employ and retain those with disabilities or health conditions, providing a reasonable level of support, assistance and adjustment where necessary to help them get the most out of their time as an employee.

Access all areas

But being equipped to deliver inclusive services isn't just about the equipment, and employing a diverse workforce doesn't guarantee your staff are fully prepared to meet and greet disabled guests or that they know how to engage with them.



PHOTO: ACTIVITY ALLIANCE

Staff need training to ensure they feel comfortable talking to people with disabilities

- ▶ "Only 5 per cent of people choose the word 'confident' as a top three term to describe how they feel when they meet a disabled person," says Hughes. "It's not that surprising, as many won't knowingly have had day-to-day contact with anyone that has a disability or life-limiting illness."

Kevin Wright is manager of [EN]GAGE, Edinburgh Napier University's sports and fitness facilities, which undertook IFI Mark accreditation as part of its Quest assessment, achieving the Excellent banding in the IFI module. His aim is to ensure their facilities are accessible in the broadest sense of the word, whether from an illness, disability or gender point of view.

Wright believes the answer lies in talking to people rather than making assumptions about what a person can and cannot do. "Treat them as you would anyone else, with dignity and respect. Don't wrap them in cotton wool or walk on eggshells as they'll see you're uncomfortable. When we ask our customers what's the best thing about [EN]GAGE they consistently say it's the staff, because they don't assume, they talk to them."

Don't walk on eggshells around disabled people, as they'll see you're uncomfortable

– Kevin Wright, [EN]GAGE



PHOTO: ACTIVITY ALLIANCE

Hughes suggests all staff should receive disability inclusion training, regardless of role, so that guests always feel comfortable and supported. This means fitness instructors, personal trainers and sports coaches should all be able to adapt exercises to cater for a member with a disability. Front of house should know what's available and whether classes are accessible. Maintenance staff should also have training, to ensure any changes they are making to the building are appropriate.

"Once your staff are ready to welcome disabled visitors it's time to make sure your facilities are ready too," says Ian Warren, a IFI Quest assessor and head of health and safety at Right Directions. "One aspect of the IFI Quest module is about venue accessibility. Can you get in the door? What about the changing rooms and toilets? How do you deal with fire evacuations and are guide dogs welcome?"

"Great, so you have a hearing loop, but do the staff know how to work it? You want people to put on overshoes poolside, but have you provided benches for people that can't bend down? We're actually disabling many people by not considering these things and inadvertently excluding a large proportion of the community, many of whom would benefit most from the services." ●

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THE HIGH LIFE

Former CEO of UK Sport John Steele became director of sport at Loughborough University in 2014 to lead an ambitious development programme. He tells Tom Walker how the new Elite Athlete Centre and Hotel is the last piece of the university's 'facility jigsaw'



Loughborough University has revealed plans to open an innovative new hotel, targeting elite athletes who visit and train at the university. Designed by David Morley Architects, the Elite Athlete Centre and Hotel (EAC) will feature 44 bedrooms and be located at the heart of the university's extensive sports facilities, adjacent to the Paula Radcliffe Athletics Stadium.

Described as the first of its kind in Europe, the hotel will house 20 specially-designed altitude rooms, allowing athletes to "live high while training low". The rooms will prepare visitors' bodies for competition by improving their oxygen carrying ability as well as their maximum oxygen take-up.

Other athlete-centric facilities at the hotel include fully-accessible bedrooms – capable of accommodating para-athletes – a nutrition lounge, an athletes' relaxation area and a seminar space for 30 people.

Where did the idea come from to set up a hotel for athletes?

Loughborough University is part of the national landscape for elite sport and one of six elite performance centres in the UK Sport network. The purpose of the centres is to have all the necessary support for athletes in one place.

At Loughborough, we have been building an ecosystem for elite sport for a while. We felt that an important part of the set up would be to offer bespoke, specialist accommodation to elite athletes – providing the correct nutrition and everything else they need. So the EAC is really the last piece of the jigsaw for us and we are very excited about it.

Tell us about the altitude rooms at the hotel

Many sports will take their athletes on altitude training camps, which usually means travelling abroad. We wanted to take the travel out of the equation and offer athletes the advantage of high altitude here.

There are only a handful of facilities in the world that can provide the kind of altitude



The Elite Athlete Centre and Hotel will feature 44 bedrooms and 20 altitude rooms



Athletes from around the world will be able to stay and train at the centre

rooms we will have. We'll be able to simulate climatic altitude conditions up to 5,000m.

How it works is that we will be able to reduce the amount of oxygen molecules and increase nitrogen molecules in the rooms. The technology, provided by a company called Sporting Edge, allows us to inject an airstream of oxygen content into the rooms, which is either at 10 per cent or 7 per cent – depending on what level the athletes want to achieve.

The aim is to increase the blood's red cell count – as red blood cells are the ones carrying oxygen to the muscles. Depending on the level of exposure, research tells us you can expect around a 3 to 5 per cent gain in performance. And as we know, sometimes a 1 per cent advantage can be the difference between finishing on the podium and not – so the gains can be considerable over a period of time.

Who will use the EAC?

The hotel will be used by a wide range of athletes. The UK's national governing bodies can now use our facility, rather than being forced to set up camps abroad, and we will also look to attract professional sports teams in the non-Olympic and Paralympic sports. We also expect it to be of interest to individuals – serious athletes who are training for triathlons, endurance events or Iron Man competitions.



The altitude rooms can produce a 3 to 5 per cent gain in performance

Are foreign athletes welcome?

Absolutely. While we work closely with UK Sport, Loughborough is a global sporting brand and we already have several nations utilising our research and our facilities.

We're hoping to see athletes and teams from other countries use the EAC before competing in the UK and Europe – as well as organising their training camps here.

How will the EAC improve the UK's elite sporting offer?

The UK has been developing its infrastructure of sporting facilities for decades now and the 2012 London Games were a great catalyst for taking that to

another level. At Loughborough, we're proud that we're now recognised globally as having one of the most advanced ecosystems for elite sport.

For us, it's not just about having cutting edge facilities – but also how they interact. We have students setting out on their journey in elite sport and we also have people like Adam Peaty, a multiple gold medallist who is at the height of his sport.

We also have an incredible diversity of excellence in all areas of elite sport – from nutritionists and conditioning coaches to physiotherapy, research and education – so you can see we have something that's very difficult to find anywhere in the world. ●

BUILDING A TEAM

Director of The Sports Consultancy Chris Marriott analyses whether councils should separate the design and build bid from the operating contract, or take an all-in-one approach

The Sports Consultancy undertook research last year that found 65 per cent of local authority leisure centres were over 25 years old and almost a third were over 40 years old.

Leisure centres tend to be well past their prime by this stage in life, becoming costly to maintain and inefficient to operate. They're considerably less attractive than their younger, newer competition and therefore struggle to draw in the necessary number of paying visitors to really make them financially sustainable. At a certain point, a decision needs to be made to take the plunge, knock it down and start over, and plenty of local authorities have been doing just that.

According to Active Places data, 125 new public leisure facilities have either been built or significantly refurbished in the past five years, all procured – in one way or another – by local authorities.



**Chris Marriott is director of
The Sports Consultancy**

This represents quite an active market, and it looks set to continue.

The root of much debate across the market at the moment is: how does a local authority best secure a team to design, build and operate a leisure centre?

To DBOM or not to DBOM?

There are really only two viable options, both of which involve the council funding the project, since they can borrow at a much lower rate than the operator. The first option is that a council secures its architect and builder team separate to its operator. This is known as a separate design and build, or 'D&B'. Alternatively, a council can secure everything

together, with the operator leading a consortium to design, build, operate and maintain the building, an option that can be referred to as a 'DBOM'.

So which one should councils go for? Of the 125 new leisure facilities opening since 2012, DBOMs are in the minority, with only seven delivered this way. The rest were largely D&B. However, DBOMs appear to be gaining popularity, with several in the pipeline.

For a council, the main benefit of the DBOM option lies in the 'one stop shop' nature of the solution: the operator gets involved in the design from the outset, meaning they can directly influence their appointed architect to ensure the proposed design is efficient from an operational perspective and is as commercial as it can be, within the constraints of the council's specifications.

Operator control over both the designers and the builders means they are both more likely to be kept in check, reducing the risk of getting a leisure centre that's too big and too expensive. Also, the council is able to transfer more risk to the operator's consortium, enjoying cost certainty, not only throughout the build but also throughout the typical 20-year contract term.

This compares to the option of separately procuring the D&B and operator contracts. While procuring these in tandem does allow opportunities for the bidding operator to comment on and influence the proposed design solution, it is nevertheless more limited.





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It costs roughly £20 million to build a new leisure centre, so it's important that local authorities make informed decisions

Why is D&B more popular?

The DBOM market tends to attract the bigger, more experienced operators that can carry the burden of additional risks and higher bidding costs.

However, the separate D&B option remains, by far, the most popular. To find out why, we spoke to the main players in the market: a selection of operators, builders, architects, project managers, lawyers and councils. The level of response was very good, indicating that this topic is one currently worth discussing.

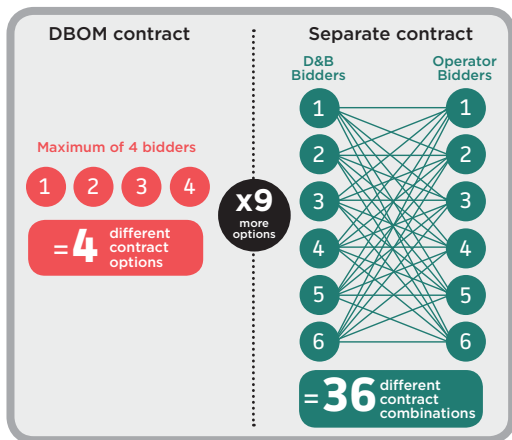
When asked which procurement option they would recommend to a council, only five out of 18 organisations opted for the DBOM, and, of these, only one was an operator. An explanation given by one respondent provides clarity:

"From an operator perspective, the DBOM bidding process is far more time-consuming. It also transfers far more risk to the operator, which ultimately means that we account for this within our cost plan, thereby negating cost efficiencies to the council in the long run."

The main problem, it seems, is the expense of bidding for the operator.



For a council, the main benefit of the DBOM option is that the operator can ensure the proposed design is as commercial as can be



► Architects, lawyers and consultants do not tend to work 'at risk' and so it is the operator's responsibility to pay their bills. The cost of these will ultimately be passed on to the local authority, but only if they win.

Widening the pool

Another issue is the lack of DBOM competition. The group of available DBOM operators for a council to choose from in procuring its contract is generally made up of just four consortiums. The main operator in the DBOM market, by some margin, is Places for People Leisure (formerly DC Leisure), with SLM Everyone Active, Parkwood and Serco also active in the market and securing contracts.

But if councils choose the separate D&B and operator contract option, there are approximately six viable operators and six viable D&B partners, giving the council 36 different contract combinations.

A tight brief

Then there's the relative complexity of bidding; it's not unusual for an operator to have to put together a number of



different variants, all of which require additional time and resource.

One respondent said: "Councils need to be absolutely specific regarding their DBOM requirements, rather than leaving a number of variants to be proposed. In some tenders we are being asked to bid on a variety of potential designs, for instance: with squash courts, without squash courts, pool size variants, etc. This adds considerable time and cost to the D&B element of the bid and also for the operational income forecasting."

Councils should know exactly what elements they want in a centre

Operators feel like they are providing consultancy advice around feasibility, need and commerciality for free – advice that should have been clearly and unequivocally provided by the council's advisors. In short, the opportunities would be more attractive to the market if the local authority knew what it wanted, where and why.

Better opportunities

Because the market is currently so busy – with contract extensions, first generation outsourcing and separate management contracts for brand new buildings procured under the separate D&B option – operators that are capable of, but lukewarm about, DBOM are often choosing to let those opportunities pass.

Operators do not make a margin on the D&B element of the DBOM, rather, their return comes exclusively from the operator element of the contract.

Legal delays

Despite being an advocate of the DBOM option, Graham Clarkson of project management firm The Clarkson Alliance highlights a disconnection between the D&B and O&M parts of the DBOM option:

"The DBOM contracts are fine from the O&M perspective. However, the D&B element is totally alien to the construction supply chain. As a consequence, a considerable amount of money is wasted on legal advice from both sides down the D&B construction supply chain, due to contractors, consultants, subcontractors and their suppliers negotiating and agreeing amendments," he says.

"These contracts could be simplified considerably by using tried and tested standard forms of contracts, for example from the NEC3 suite of contracts."



There is a lack of popularity for DBOMs among the design community



© SHUTTERSTOCK/EVENKONIN ASSHOV

Paul Robertson from MACE suggests centre designs be taken to a recognised level before releasing them to operators

Designing DBOMs

The survey identified a lack of popularity among the design community. The reasons for this are perhaps best articulated by Keith Ashton of Space & Place Architects.

"The criteria councils use to evaluate the DBOM proposals from the market are heavily geared towards the operator element, principally because the subsidy/surplus values carry a much higher weighting than design and build quality. Some councils have regretted losing control of the design solution. While good independent monitoring can alleviate the issue, the problem of inappropriate build quality on some DBOMs is becoming apparent."

Paul Robertson from MACE project management suggests one way to address this: "I think a design needs to be taken to a certain recognised level by the council prior to releasing it to operators. Tendering at RIBA 1 is not sufficient, an element of concept design (RIBA Stage 2) needs to be undertaken."

The big decision

So, with all this in mind, which option provides councils better value for money? It's clear that there is no consensus within the market. Unfortunately, there are so many variables in every project that unless a council was to simultaneously run a DBOM procurement and a separate D&B and O&M procurement for the



Some councils have regretted losing control of the design solution. Inappropriate build quality is becoming a problem on DBOMs

same opportunity, there's no way to get a clear answer.

It appears we should, as a market, be focusing on how best to enhance the features of the DBOM option so it can be considered a viable and sustainable alternative to the traditional approach. In the meantime, councils offering DBOM opportunities may struggle to compete, as the majority of operators choose to pursue the considerably less expensive, and more appealing, standard management contracts, of which there are currently plenty.

But whatever option a local authority ultimately chooses to follow, crucial to the success of any leisure development and its ongoing operation is an understanding of the associated risks and the amount of control and flexibility it provides.

It is, therefore, prudent for a council to explore all options and to choose the one that best fits its objectives. Open, collaborative discussion with experts from across the field, such as operators, builders, architects, advisers and experienced local authorities, will be worth the investment in time to help inform its choice. ●

A FASCINATING INSIGHT

The Sports Consultancy thanks the following organisations for responding to the survey.

- ▶ Birmingham Council
- ▶ Browne Jacobson
- ▶ The Clarkson Alliance
- ▶ Freedom
- ▶ GLL
- ▶ Hadron
- ▶ Harborough Council
- ▶ ISG
- ▶ LA Architects
- ▶ Mace
- ▶ Nabarro
- ▶ One Life
- ▶ Orchard Beach Consulting
- ▶ Pelikaan
- ▶ Places for People
- ▶ Serco Leisure
- ▶ SLM Everyone Active
- ▶ Space & Place Architects
- ▶ Willmott Dixon

ELEVATE 2018 PREVIEW:

GET READY FOR THE UK'S LARGEST PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TRADE EVENT

Now in its third year, Elevate returns to ExCel London on 9-10 May 2018. This year's show will also run alongside COPA Series and the Elite Sports Performance and Rehabilitation Expo; attracting an audience of over 8,000 purchasers, specifiers and potential partners

With growing support from the industry, organisers of Elevate have invested this year in creating an inaugural Elevate Conference. Thought leaders will present on subjects from social prescribing and active urban design through to digital disruption and community-wide behaviour change initiatives – with a goal to facilitate bigger picture thinking that can unleash the full power of the physical activity sector as a force for good in society.

Seminars

In addition to the new two-day conference, this year's seminar

programme continues to develop, and this year will include four streams focusing on: physical activity for health and wellbeing; strategies for an active nation; the business of physical activity; and, performance: maximising potential.

In total, the programme includes 40 free-to-attend seminar sessions with over 230 leading speakers, representing organisations including: Department of Health, GLL, World Health Organisation, NHS England, Sport England, ukactive, Virgin Active, Park Run, DCMS, MacMillan Cancer Research, David Lloyd Clubs, England Athletics, Places for People, ECB and British Gas.

In the strategies for an active nation stream, speakers will examine how the physical activity industry and its wider stakeholders can reach and influence the inactive, exploring how to create opportunities for people to be active in ways that fit with their everyday lives and interests. Kate Dale, strategic lead – campaigns, Sport England will chair a session exploring two examples of how traditional sports have been redesigned to attract and target new audiences and re-engage those who may not have participated for some time.

Kate comments: "I'm really excited to be chairing this session. Those of us who work in the sport sector understand the physical, mental and social benefits that getting active can bring, and hopefully get to experience them first hand. If we want to make sport and physical activity relevant and appealing to those who 'don't see it as something for people like them', we need to try new approaches. Elevate is a great platform for us to have those discussions – learning from others' mistakes and successes."

Another session in the strategies for an active nation stream, chaired by Huw Edwards, public affairs director at ukactive, will consider ways of improving inclusivity and driving participation amongst disabled



The Elevate event includes live group fitness demonstrations

ELEVATE

Elevate 2018 speakers include:



Tracey Crouch MP
Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State



Sir Muir Gray
Better Value Healthcare



Dr Michael Mosley
BBC



Tanja Joseph
This Girl Can



Alana Officer
World Health
Organisation



Tam Fry
National Obesity Forum



Michael Dixon
NHS England



Kate Dale
Sport England



Peter Fitzboyden
Parkwood Leisure



people. Panellists in this discussion include Professor Brett Smith, head of research, School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences at University of Birmingham, Adam Blaze, strategic lead disability at Sport England, Phil Lane, head of sport & communities team at GLL and Andy Dalby-Welsh, deputy chief executive at English Federation of Disability Sports. This panel discussion will explore the latest approaches for successfully delivering inclusive interventions, examining how to create the right environments, adaptations of services, removal of barriers, and engagement strategies to and stimulate participation and enjoyment.

Huw comments: "As a sector we must strive to remove the barriers that prevent disabled people from engaging more in physical activity. It is vital that this issue is on the top of our agenda – whether that be through shining the light on the topic at Elevate, or through cross-sector initiatives like the one currently led by uactive, Sport England, Disability Rights UK and the EFDS to give disabled people better access to physical activity opportunities."

Exhibition

During both days of Elevate the growing Exhibition takes centre stage and with over 200 leading suppliers showcasing

There are infinite opportunities to make consumer experiences deeper and more meaningful. We just need to work together and collaborate as much as possible

the latest products and innovations designed to help private and public-sector gym operators, local authorities, healthcare professionals, personal trainers, schools, sports clubs and universities get the nation moving more. Exhibitors include Matrix, Clubbright, Core Health & Fitness, eGym, Gerflor, Gympass, Jordan Fitness, Power2SMS, Total Gym, Willmott Dixon and Xn Leisure.

Elevate will provide the platform for SWIMTAG to officially launch a series of exciting new challenge features. Kieran Sloyan, managing director at 222 Sports, developers of SWIMTAG, says: "We're really looking forward to Elevate this year. Last year the show connected us with several new partners, so we're hoping for a similar level of engagement this year. The platform is the perfect environment ▶



At the trade show, over 200 leading suppliers will showcase the latest products and innovations



Last year the show connected us with several new partners, so we're hoping for a similar level of engagement this year



► for us to showcase our new innovations. This year we will be officially launching our new challenge features that will enable operators to organise internet-based team Battles across multiple locations."

Total Gym will be showcasing its range of adaptable gym equipment for the first time in the UK, while SportsArt will introduce two new models to its ECO-POWER™ and ECO-NATURAL lines including VERDE, the only energy-producing treadmill in the industry, and the new N685 non-motorized, completely self-powered treadmill which allows walking, jogging, running, sprinting or sled-pushing.

Matrix will help gyms to take HIIT to the next level with its S-Force Performance Trainer, which combines a specifically designed motion and magnetic resistance system to automatically increase the intensity, the harder the user trains.

A popular addition to last year's show, the Elevate Innovation Awards return in

2018, recognising the best products and services in defined categories, linking to the show's themes of inclusivity, performance, health and wellbeing and business. Judged by a panel of industry experts, the five categories are: Best Health and Wellness Innovation, Best Workout Innovation, Best Facility Innovation, Best Innovation for Human Performance and Best Start-up.

Commenting on the show's huge success in its first two years, Max Quittenton, founder and director of Elevate, says: "We're incredibly proud of the support and contributions that so many passionate and knowledgeable professionals make to Elevate each year."

"For all the right reasons, tackling physical inactivity remains the shared goal of all those involved. Put simply, Elevate 2018 is unrivalled as the best opportunity of the year to learn more about the whole subject of physical activity."

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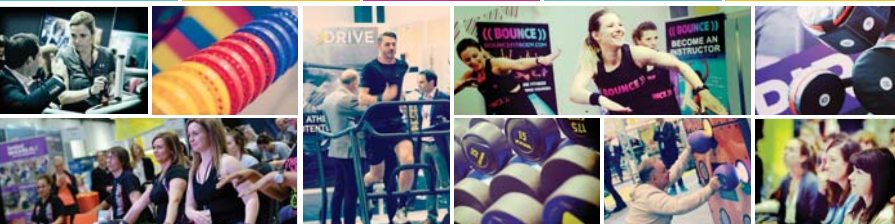
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Stephen Hulme

As Everyone Active celebrates its 30th anniversary, CEO Stephen Hulme talks to Sports Management about how it all started and how he and his team have built one of the most successful operating companies in the UK

How did you end up as CEO of SLM?

After school, I decided not to go to university, and instead accepted a training role at Oldham Borough Council: I was a keen swimmer and played waterpolo at national level, which is partly why I chose the industry.

After a series of promotions in local government and completing an MBA, I moved to Hinckley and Bosworth council, arriving just as finances were prompting them to start looking at alternative management options.

I approached the chief executive – who was very supportive – and asked if I could set up my own company to tender for the work. It wasn't a well thought out plan – more a reactive response.

I'd just moved my family to the area, had an eighteen-month-old daughter and had enjoyed the security of a local government job, so the risks were massive, but with the benefit of hindsight it was absolutely the right decision.



How did it go?

It wasn't a well-planned strategy to move into the sector and running a new business from scratch with next to no financial backing and trying to keep my head above water was the biggest challenge by far. Every time my bank manager phoned me, I wondered if he was going to pull the plug.

Almost overnight, I became responsible for the employment of 55 colleagues and I never underestimated that. It was

challenging coming to terms with a completely different role. I was lifeguarding during the day and cleaning changing rooms until 11.00pm at night.

What would you have done differently?

I'm sure we made lots of mistakes, but given we had very little time to form the company before commencing operations, I like to think we got more things right than wrong, and in light of that, I probably wouldn't have done anything differently.

SLM has grown to be one of the biggest operators in the UK. What have been your biggest successes?

Whenever we've won a contract, we've always significantly increased the number of people using the facilities and also enhanced the facilities and services.

I'd put this success down to the quality and breadth of facilities we offer – many of our centres surpass those offered by the private sector. Our centres typically have a 25m pool, indoor climbing, gyms with over 100 stations and multifunctional studios. We're also starting to introduce more high-end spa facilities and hot yoga studios.

Our level of service allows us to create a point of difference when compared with budget gyms and other leisure operators. We have higher colleague ratios and invest more in colleague development than many of our competitors. This is a significant change from where the local authority sector was 10 or even five years ago.

How has the industry changed?

It's changed beyond recognition. There's no comparison in terms of the quality and



Everyone Active and Alex Danson's hockey programme



National Fitness Day is an important fixture in the Everyone Active calendar

“ Our centres have some of the most diverse facilities you'd find in a leisure centre – from hot yoga to spas – we offer facilities above the ‘traditional’ local authority offering

number of facilities. Thirty years ago, few leisure centres had gyms – mainly swimming pools or sports halls. Today our centres have some of the most diverse facilities you'd find in a leisure centre – from hot yoga to spa – above the ‘traditional’ local authority offering.

Management has also changed, along with the competition – particularly the growth in private sector provision.

When SLM was formed, if you wanted to go for a swim, you had no choice but to use a local authority facility; there were very few private alternatives, now there are many.

What are the biggest opportunities and threats the sector is facing?

The opportunities and threats are inextricably linked. We have an opportunity to demonstrate the correlation between sport and leisure provision and the health and wellbeing of our communities. The challenges are

massive, but are recognised and supported by bodies such as ukactive.

You rebranded as Everyone Active in 2007. Why?

Everything from swimming lessons and children's activities to our fitness brand, had a different name – there was no common identity, so we recruited a marketing agency to look at how we could approach this better: we wanted everyone to be active, regardless of gender or age, so Everyone Active was born to communicate that message.

In 2014, SLM launched Everyone Health. How has that been going?

There's a definite link between the health agenda and what we do in sport and leisure. Everyone Health came about in response to changes in policy with regards to commissioning services and the Local Authority responsibilities. We were one of

the first companies to establish a dedicated public health division.

It was an obvious diversification for us, particularly given our belief that the two sectors will be increasingly linked. I think it's a big opportunity for the company and one that's going to grow over the next five years.

We've already seen a significant increase in opportunities. Everyone Health already manages contracts on behalf of Cambridge and Nottingham county councils and Nottingham City Council.

What's your SWOT analysis of SLM?

By far our biggest strength is our people at all levels. If you asked me one reason I've been successful, it's because I've been lucky to have such excellent colleagues. Many have stayed with us for 10, 15, 20 years.

We value them all – whether they're directors or lifeguards – it doesn't matter. Everyone has a pivotal role and that's in the ethos of the company.

Everyone Active

Key moments

1988:

First contract at Hinckley Leisure Centre awarded to SLM

2002:

Tenth contract awarded is Ashfield to manage six leisure centres

2000:

Sale of SLM to Castleview

2007:

Start of the Everyone Active brand and opening of the 50th site as part of the Bristol contract

2010:

Everyone Active wins Leisure Operator of the Year at ukactive's Flame Awards (and again in 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2017)

2012:

Plymouth Life Centre Opening

2013:

Commencement of the Ealing, Brent & Harrow contract

2014:

SLM sets up Everyone Health

2015:

Everyone Active signs leisure joint venture with Sunderland City Council to manage nine sites

2016:

- Everyone Active wins 'contract with Westminster City Council to manage eight sites'
- Everyone Active wins 'contract with Southwark Council to manage eight sites'
- Everyone Active establishes its Sporting Champions programme to support athlete development, with Colin Jackson as its ambassador

2017:

Everyone Active wins leisure operator of the year for the fifth time at ukactive's Flame Awards



The launch of the Westminster contract



When I set up SLM, someone told me to never look back. They said it would be one hell of a challenge and to just look forward

When we take on a contract, the new teams are always pleasantly surprised by the extent to which they're encouraged to take responsibility and the level of support they get from regional and group colleagues. There's no doubt in my mind this is what differentiates us from our competitors.

I don't believe we have many weaknesses, but as a business we constantly strive to improve, as we recognise there'll always be things we could do better.

There are plenty of opportunities to grow the business in terms of the number of services we manage, and to show the link between how those facilities are run and the health and wellbeing of communities.

The biggest threat comes in the form of the financial pressures that local authorities are continuing to face.

Successive governments have been working to turn "sick care" into "health care" – including making activity a preventative measure available on the NHS. Is enough being done?

Absolutely not. It's a massive challenge. In conjunction with many of our 45 local authority partners we offer 'health services', many of which are free.

Although services are free, it's a challenge to fill all the places we have, so I don't subscribe to view that the problem is

all down to funding. While there's excellent work being done, we have to get better at engaging our target market.

I don't think it's a government thing. Services are being provided to educate communities about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, but the challenge for those of us managing services is to get enough people engaged with them.

There should be more of this – working to change people's perception – I don't think providing more free services would necessarily mean more people using them.

What's the best bit of business advice you've ever been given?

When I set up SLM, someone told me to never look back. They said it would be one hell of a challenge and to just look forward.

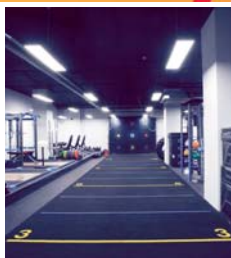
If you had the power to introduce one law, what would it be?

Local authority sport and leisure should be made a statutory service.

What will SLM look like in 30 years' time, when it celebrates its 60th?

I hope SLM will be the leading provider of sport and leisure and a market leader in the management of health and wellbeing services, which are primarily being managed by the NHS at present. ●

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TAM FRY

For 20 years, Tam Fry has tirelessly campaigned to raise awareness of obesity. The chair of the National Obesity Forum talks to **Kath Hudson** about his career, the obesity crisis and where we go from here



When I first started commenting on obesity, the government projected that seven per cent of men and five per cent of women would be obese by 2005," says Tam Fry, chair of the National Obesity Forum. "However, 20 years later, 27 per cent of men and women are obese and a further 25 per cent are overweight. I wake up every morning feeling depressed about the situation, but I will campaign for the

rest of my life. Every day there is a new story on obesity for me to comment on."

While the government stalls, the population continues to get fatter. The projection is that, by 2050, half of the UK population will be obese. Fry says it will take generations to reverse a problem that has been created in a couple of decades. "It will continue to get worse, daily, until the government recognises the extent of the issue and decides to tackle it head on. With May's

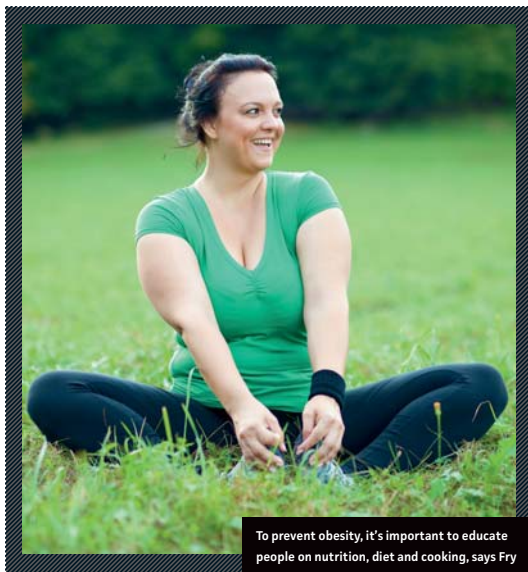
government caught up with Brexit, this won't happen any time soon."

Now aged 80, Fry, a former BBC television producer, is still as passionate as ever about his cause. He has been commenting on obesity since it was first recognised as a problem in the 1990s. His route into the space was co-founding the Child Growth Foundation in the 1970s, to raise awareness of children's growth issues, after his daughter was diagnosed with a growth hormone deficiency.

One of the charity's big wins came in 1995, when it used the growth data it had accumulated to create BMI charts for children – the first time this had ever been done. The parameters it set are still used today. "This sealed our fate, as everyone became very interested in obesity," says Fry. So in addition to being spokesperson of the Child Growth Foundation, Fry took on the role of spokesperson for the National Obesity Forum, subsequently becoming its chair.

Junk foods are
convenient and cheap





To prevent obesity, it's important to educate people on nutrition, diet and cooking, says Fry

“We have crap leadership from public health and are forced to live in an obesogenic environment

POOR PEOPLE ARE FATTER

Fry identifies a number of factors that have led to more than 60 per cent of the UK population being overweight, many of which boil down to a lack of time, money or both. Obesity is a product of deprivation, with a huge disparity between the most deprived areas and the most affluent. For example, in the deprived London borough Brent, 47 per cent of children under 11 are overweight, compared to 25 per cent in affluent Richmond.

According to Fry, public education is also lacking. “There is an astonishing level of ignorance about food; many people don’t understand calories and labelling. They are eating too much of the wrong food, with not enough exercise,” he says.

“Also, we have crap leadership from public health and are forced to live in an obesogenic environment.”

Fry says that a generation lost out on cooking skills when catering was taken off the curriculum, and as a result, some parents are now being taught to cook by their children. “The food industry stepped in to fill the gap with processed food, containing an unhealthy level of hidden sugars,” he says. “Both money and time are factors. It takes time to buy ingredients and cook from scratch, but it’s easy to buy ready-made food and put it in a microwave. Also, many families can’t afford to eat well – the cheapest food is junk food.”

TAM'S TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER NATION

- 1 Ban TV ads for foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar [HFSS] until 9pm and across the board on social media.
- 2 Step up action to limit HFSS in all UK-produced food and drink. The sugary drinks levy (effective April 1st) will be a success, and will demonstrate that using fiscal levers to influence reformulation works.
- 3 Set calorie and portion limits for all food and drink products. Make it mandatory for calorie counts to be displayed on all goods.
- 4 Ban shop promotions that result in people buying more. These ‘bargains’ account for most of the 10 per cent that we overeat.
- 5 Create a mandate to improve nutritional labelling on all packaged foods together with a uniform traffic light system. Breaking from the rigid EU system will help.
- 6 Focus on obesity prevention measures, particularly in the crucial first 1,000 days of a child’s life. A child picking up bad eating/lifestyle habits in its early years sets the seal for later obesity.

7 Clamp down on fast food/corner shops within range of schools. Burger joints and vans make a mockery of attempts to encourage schoolchildren to eat healthily.

A new levy on sugary drinks aims to reduce childhood obesity

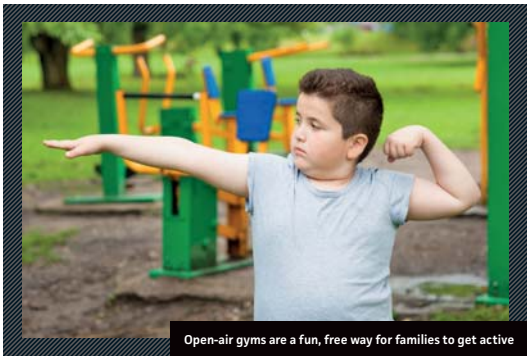


© SHUTTERSTOCK/WILSON PHOTOS



Fun is the most important ingredient in getting people to exercise.

Open-air gyms are great because cost is a major barrier for many people



Open-air gyms are a fun, free way for families to get active

© SHUTTERSTOCK/KOENSEN

of obesity than it receives from the food industry. The country is now spending £6.1bn a year on obesity alone, if you include comorbidities the figure rises to £24bn.

"The greatest harm of obesity is the comorbidities it triggers, including diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, hypertension, stroke, liver problems and fertility problems," he says. "If people understood how the fat inside them clogs their life-giving organs, I'm sure they would be more inclined to tackle their weight. Ninety five per cent of people who are overweight could prevent it, there are only a very small number who have genetic problems."

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Providing low cost and fun opportunities to exercise is the best way for the industry to help, particularly in engaging children, says

Fry. "Fun is the most important ingredient, and cost remains a major barrier for many people, which is why I'm a big fan of outdoor exercise and open air gyms. I also have a lot of time for organisations that help to educate people on nutrition and diet."

Going forward, Fry looks forward to the day when all children are routinely measured from birth onwards. "The key to a better future is to work with children and stop them becoming fat, because once they are fat adults it's too late," he says. "We need to do everything to ensure kids proceed at a healthy weight, pass this down to their kids and then slowly we will get a healthy population. That's an achievement I look forward to, but I don't think I will be around to see it. It depends on a government recognising the enormity of the problem and doing something dramatic about it." ●

AN UNHEEDED WARNING

Published in 2014, The McKinsey Report made David Cameron vow to tackle the obesity issue with draconian measures. Unfortunately, he left office without implementing his strategy and Theresa May replaced it with a weaker version.

A strategy of 44 interventions were recommended. These included

reformulation of food products, restrictions on advertising, higher taxation on high sugar or high fat products, active transport, workplace wellness and public health campaigns.

The report says if nothing changes, almost half of the world's population could be overweight or obese by 2030.



GOVERNMENT INACTION

The situation is unlikely to change until the government is prepared to take on the food industry. "In practical terms, the only agency that can orchestrate change in society is government and it needs to act in a forceful manner, but for 25 years, successive governments have refused to take action," says Fry. "The long term success depends on the food industry reformulating products, but they have built up huge followings by training people to eat ultra sweet food and now argue that they can't just take the sugar out."

The food industry is a fearsome opponent for the government. It yields £112bn tax revenue, and provides one in 10 jobs in the UK. "It would take a strong government to tackle the food industry," says Fry, "but Tony Blair and David Cameron both had sufficient majorities to do this."

However, despite the protests from the food industry, it may soon get past the tipping point, where the government is spending more on coping with the problems



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HIGH PROFILE

One of four new sports set to debut at Tokyo 2020, sport climbing was added for its youth appeal. **Kath Hudson** reports on this exciting sport, which is hitting the mainstream



Climbing is unique, there is nothing else like it in the Olympic Games," says president of the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) president, Marco Sclaris. "No athlete today is pushing the limits in the vertical dimension like competitive climbers. We're not using tools to climb, the equipment is for safety only. Strength, speed and endurance at height, climbing has it all!"

A sport that tests mind and body control, athleticism and strength, climbing has been added to the Olympic programme because of its youth appeal, IOC president, Thomas Bach has explained. "We want to take sport to the youth." He continued. "With the many options young people have, we can no longer expect they will automatically come to us – we have to go to them."

Athletes will all climb in three different formats. Speed, where they go head to head up a 15m wall in a knockout format. Bouldering, which involves creative gymnastic climbs without ropes, a short distance from the ground. And lead climbing, where they climb to extreme heights on a man-made structure. The winner in lead climbing is either the first to the top, or the one who gets to the highest point before falling. All formats will take place indoors on purpose-built walls.

Olympic inclusion

This format has received some criticism, because climbers usually specialise in only one of the disciplines. It has been likened to asking Usain Bolt to run a marathon. Czech climber, Adam Ondra – the only man in history to win both lead and bouldering World Cups in the same year – has threatened to boycott the Games, as he believes speed events are artificial. However, the UK's top female climber, Shauna Coxsey, a double bouldering World Cup champion, has got behind



Speed climbing is a race to the top which can take less than six seconds

© IFSC/EDM FOWNE



Sclaris: "No athlete is pushing the limits like competitive climbers"

the decision, saying it will make her a better athlete.

Other critics have railed against this anti-establishment sport being taken mainstream, saying it will destroy the art of each discipline and that rules will overregulate a sport that thrives on freedom of expression. However, the majority of the climbing community has welcomed the extra profile the Olympics will give climbing and say the proposed format will make for an exciting competition, which will engage young people, be telegenic and boost participation.

Ben Ingle, head of membership services at the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC), says the Olympics will be a great shop window: "The format has caused a conversation, but, for viewers, it will make climbing watchable and relatable."

Sclaris believes the Olympics will boost an already fast-growing sport: "Along with inclusion in the Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will allow the sport to continue to leap



Up to 25 million people climb regularly all round the world, with the sport appealing to people of all ages

forward. This rapid development and growth, now also starting to register in many developing countries, proves climbing can be proposed as an alternative, spectacular activity to people of all ages, everywhere."

Accessible sport

Although indoor climbing began as a winter alternative to outdoor climbing, it has been considered a sport in its own right for around a decade. "Think of it like swimming, where one could swim in natural waters outdoors, or in swimming pools inside," says Sclaris. "The swimmers perform the same activity but express themselves in very different environments. The same is true for climbing, which is why we don't use the term 'artificial climbing walls' anymore."

Assuming the Olympics do spark widespread interest in climbing, how easy will it be for interested people to take up the sport? Ingle says the sport is very accessible, with an estimated 200-250 climbing walls in the UK alone, while the IFSC estimates people have access to climbing walls in more than 150 countries.

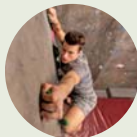
THREE WAYS TO CLIMB

Competitions are held indoors on three types of wall: lead, speed, and bouldering. Usually athletes specialise in one, but at the 2020 Olympics they will have to compete in all three.

Lead climbing requires endurance and strategy. Athletes secured by a rope climb up an overhanging wall with a 6-minute time limit; the one who gets the highest wins.

Speed climbing is usually done on vertical walls up to 15 metres high, with two climbers climbing next to each other in a race to the top, which is usually reached in under 6 seconds!

Bouldering requires power and technique, with athletes performing explosive, spectacular movements up to a height of four metres. If they fall they land on safety mats. The winner is the athlete who climbs the hardest route in the fewest attempts.



© SHUTTERSTOCK/JOA PRODUCTIONS



CLIMBING IN POPULARITY

25m people climb regularly, around the world

In the US it's estimated that **1,000-1,500 new people** try the sport every day

The number of young people taking part in the British Mountaineering Council's Youth Climbing Series has risen by **50%** in the last five years

In the last 10 years, the number of IFSC member federations has increased by **25%**

In Austria, members of climbing clubs increased from **23,000 in 2008 to 64,000 in 2016**

38% of new climbers are under 18

38% of participants are female

• Statistics according to global research from IFSC.

► "It's a massively accessible sport, but the challenge will be to make sure that those who are inspired to try climbing will get a quality experience, and have time with an instructor," says Ingle. "Centres like Clip n Climb are great for entry level and make climbing look exciting, but it would be great if they could build links with the local climbing community, so people who are keen to do so can access clubs and other centres."

Growth potential

Ingle says a decent climbing centre can be created in a space the size of a tennis court. There are two main types of climbing area: tall ropes, up a wall, which need a height of around 10m, and bouldering, which only requires a four metre height and doesn't use ropes. He advises using a climbing technical advisor to design a facility so it offers enough versatility and throughput, as well as signing up to ABC's code of practise. "Safety is the most important thing," he says. "You can make climbing safe, so it's rare to have an accident or get an injury."

He adds that climbing has good synergy with activities like yoga and swimming, so the crossover benefits could be promoted. Additionally, climbing is a fundamental

Climbing has the same number of participants as sailing, but while sailing gets £363 a head in funding, climbing shares £18 a head with three other sports



Climbing appeals most to 25- to 35-year-olds

movement, which means practicing it could benefit children as they develop their physical literacy.

As a new sport, however, climbing still struggles with funding. Ingle says it has the same number of participants as sailing, but while sailing receives £363 per head in funding, climbing shares just £18 a head with ski mountaineering, hill walking and mountaineering. He concedes the sport needs to pull together to start lobbying for funding and better promote itself.

Despite this, there's plenty to be optimistic about. Those involved say it's an addictive sport, with good retention. ABC estimates there's a 50/50 gender split among children in the UK, and that one million people currently climb in the UK, with 70 per cent only climbing indoors and some even climbing five days a week. As 2020 nears, it will be interesting to watch progress. ●

CASE STUDY

WESTWAY LEISURE CENTRE

Operated by Everyone Active, the Westway Sports and Fitness Centre boasts the largest lead climbing facility in the south of England. Originally opened in 1994, improvements have recently been made, with the addition of a bouldering facility

Jez Tapping, Everyone Active's regional climbing manager at Westway, London

The layout of Westway lends itself to climbing because at 13.5m, it's very high," says Jez Tapping, Everyone Active's regional climbing manager. "It's a great revenue generator for the facility: the climbing centre covers the area of a couple of football pitches, but it has 10 times the throughput of football."

Tapping says climbing appeals to a wider demographic than some other sports and is appealing to women, with a 50/50 gender split. "We have climbers of all ages, but it's most popular with 25- to 35-year-olds," he says.

The climbing centre is always busy. Westway welcomes 500 school children a week through its nationally-recognised coaching programme, and also runs introductory courses for adults. Once people have completed a course they can pay to

climb casually. There are also club nights, technical workshops and an exercise class, Boulderercise. Tapping says climbing fits in well with the club's offering, as the climbers also use the gym and yoga and pilates classes to support their sport.

"Climbing has been a fairly anti-establishment sport, until the last 10 years, but indoor climbing walls have created a new audience for the sport," says Tapping. "Some people who learn to climb with us progress to take part in competitions or outdoor climbing, but high numbers stay indoors and use it as a good way of keeping fit.

All the climbing centres I've seen open in London in the last few years have been based around bouldering – it only requires a height of 5m

"There's been a massive growth in bouldering in the last few years. All the climbing centres I've seen open in London in the last couple of years, and all those slated to open, have been based around bouldering – they're easier to open and manage, only requiring a height of around 5m."

Tapping welcomes the inclusion of climbing in the Olympics, saying it will give great coverage to an already popular and fast growing sport, and predicts it will continue to go from strength to strength.

● Read more: *Sports Management* November/December 2017, p44.

AGAINST THE ODDS

Years of austerity couldn't stop Birmingham's victorious Commonwealth Games bid. **Matthew Campelli** talks to those involved about how this dream became reality



It's party time in Birmingham the day I sit down with Zena Wooldridge, the University of Birmingham director of sport, European Squash Federation president and member of the steering group tasked with bringing the Commonwealth Games to the UK's second city.

"We're having a bit of a celebration," says Wooldridge, modestly referring to the shindig to be held that night at the Barclaycard Arena, a venue which will also hold events at the Games in 2022. Four days before Christmas 2017, the Commonwealth Games Federation announced that Birmingham had won its bid. Because of the time of year, a proper celebration wasn't on the cards. Two months later, that's about to be put right.

It's difficult not to be impressed with the city's victory against the odds. With Durban (the original hosts of the 2022 Games) pulling out five years before the event, Birmingham – and other potential hosts – had a very limited time to put a comprehensive bid together.

Birmingham also had to contend with Liverpool trying to get the advantage by declaring a bid early in the process. And, hardest of all, the bid was submitted against a backdrop of austerity cuts that the city council and wider combined authority has been dealing with for years.



Zena Wooldridge was a member of the Birmingham bid steering committee



Birmingham has been chosen to host the Commonwealth Games in 2022

Gaining strength from adversity

Wooldridge claims that facing adversity ultimately had a positive effect on the city's ambitious bid.

"Austerity actually meant that the city council had to work in partnership to a greater extent," she explains.

"The Commonwealth Games bid then brought the opportunity to transform the city further. It all came together, as we pulled partners in and started making the Games something that was more than just a dream. We found we could make it a reality, despite the austerity."

It's estimated that the local council has had its budget cut by £650m since 2010, a huge amount,



Birmingham's Alexander Stadium is being redeveloped to host the athletics events



The local council has had huge budget cuts, which almost put the bid in doubt



Squash will be held at the University of Birmingham

which has affected a number of public services – and which almost put the bid in doubt.

"The problem was finding the funding," explains Anita Bhalla, chair of Birmingham's Creative City Partnership. "It was a challenge right to last minute. Everyone knows in Birmingham that the council has financial challenges, but the bid was brought together by partnerships."

Bhalla explains: "The financial demands of hosting a Commonwealth Games are quite difficult, for any city. The Commonwealth Games Federation may need to tweak its demands, because cities like ours that aren't rich in terms of finances will never be able to bid.

"We have riches in terms of our infrastructure, our people and our ability to show that we've successfully held events like these in the past."

A winning proposition

Infrastructure was one of the most attractive aspects of Birmingham's bid, with around 95 per cent of the venues

earmarked for the Games already built. The NEC, the Barclaycard Arena, the Genting Arena and Symphony Hall will host the indoor events, while the Alexander Stadium is being redeveloped to host the outdoor athletics events.

The only capital that's being spent on construction is going towards a new aquatics centre that's being built in the Sandwell region of the city, and an ambitious Athlete Village and social housing complex being developed in the deprived Perry Barr district. Around 1,000 new homes will be built in an effort to regenerate the area.

"Capital investment that's being spent fits strategically with the longer term requirements for the wider region, anyway," says Wooldridge. "The pool, the athletics stadium, the village. And we have new facilities at the University of Birmingham that can host the hockey and squash."

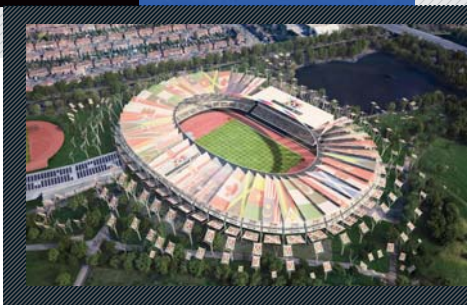
Aside from the existing infrastructure, both Wooldridge and Bhalla agree that the culture of the region, plus a concerted push from a few key individuals, were key to getting the bid over the line. ▶



The Games is expected to benefit the health and activity levels of Birmingham residents

“

I think the Commonwealth Games Federation got quite excited that we wanted to showcase our culture



► “Ian Ward (leader of Birmingham City Council and chair of the bid team) made his passion for sport clear,” says Wooldridge. “He was in a really good position to lead it and bring partners on board. He could see the value in engaging partners, rather than thinking the city could do it on its own, which has happened in the past.

Alexander Stadium's capacity will be increased from 12,700 to 50,000 for the Games

“The election of Andy Street as mayor of the Combined Authority also helped. He included the bid for the Games in his election manifesto, which meant the whole debate progressed at a Combined Authority level rather than just in Birmingham.”

More than sport

Bhalla adds: “I wanted to make sure that alongside the sports there would be a cultural offering. I think the Commonwealth Games Federation got quite excited

that we wanted to engage people in different ways by also showcasing our amazing culture.”

According to financial projections, the Commonwealth Games could deliver more than £1bn in economic impact to the UK, with much of that going to Birmingham and the West Midlands area. But Bhalla is keen to stress that hosting the Games is worth more than that.

“The net benefit of hosting the Games is not just economical. We also want to measure the social and health impact of the Games,” she says.

Before then, a large amount of work needs occur to get the city ready, but Wooldridge is ready for the challenge.

“The bid process was really fascinating in terms of turning a vision and a dream into a reality,” she says. “Now we’ve got four years to deliver, so we have to get our act together very quickly.” ●

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LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF GREATNESS

Strength and conditioning programmes for young athletes are growing in popularity. But what are the benefits and is this a trend that is here to stay? **Kath Hudson** reports



At elite level, strength and conditioning programmes can make the difference between a podium finish or just missing out, and this is having a trickle down effect for young athletes. Strength and conditioning programmes are now being developed to give talented children and teenagers the edge.

According to The National Strength and Conditioning Association, there is research to show that strength and conditioning programmes for young people can improve muscular strength and power, motor skill performance, bone density and body composition, which all improve performance, but they can also help to create resistance to injury and ensure the body is in balance.



© RICHARD YAN LIDON



Westway's young tennis champion
Andrea Pineda

As a young person grows, their systems are developing and adapting. What they do physically during this time will shape their abilities

Even though this trend is in its infancy, programmes are getting fantastic results. For example, in London, the Westway Young Athletes programme has helped to produce a 13-year-old tennis champion: Andrea Pineda has won both the national singles and doubles titles for tennis in the U14 age group, and, at the end of 2017, was ranked in the top 20 in Europe for U14. Pretty good for someone who first came to the centre as a four-year-old for a community pay-and-play session.

Launched in January 2017, the Westway programme is led by coach Mark Sheppard, who has previously worked with the England and Wales Cricket Board, the British Paralympic Association, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Sports Youth Trust and the English Institute of Sport. Open to tennis players, footballers, climbers and other performance players, the programme aims to develop strength, power, stamina, agility, speed and mobility.



Westway's programme caters to athletes from nine to 13 years of age



A balanced approach

"As a young person grows, their systems are developing and adapting. What they do physically during this time will have a greater impact on their abilities than at any other time in their lives," says Sheppard.

"Every sport is physically beneficial, but no single sport provides the whole range of development needed to produce a well-rounded and fully developed athlete. Plus, the repeated patterns of a sport can produce repetitive strains which lead to injury and muscle imbalance, so conditioning exercises are needed to manage this."

"For this reason, our programme is not just about 'stronger, faster and fitter' high-intensity training, but also about balancing all of the aspects needed for long-term athlete development. It's designed to complement the specific training of the sports practiced by the young people, and to give them the tools to be able to take care of themselves and prepare them for specialisation within a chosen sport."

Two sessions per week are run for each age group: nine to 12 years and 13 to 16 years. In a typical session each athlete would go through a range of bodyweight and

At WESPA, we ensure young athletes develop holistically in order to produce winners and podium finishers at local, national and international level



WESPA's sporting director Alastair Saverimutto

plyometric exercises, learning fundamentals such as how to jump and squat properly. The older group also uses light weights for strengthening exercises, flexibility and recovery.

Transferable skills

Created by former international rugby player Alastair Saverimutto, The World Elite Sports Performance Academy (WESPA) targets 16- to 18-year-olds with the intention of creating more podium stars. Saverimutto has spent two years developing the first programme, in the north of England, but hopes to roll the concept out across the UK, with the intention of widening the net to find more young talent to translate into podium success.

"WESPA's mantra is simple and unequivocal," says Saverimutto. "We don't simply wish to develop athletes ▶



ESS Performance alumnus Kathryn Mitchell has gone on to win Gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games

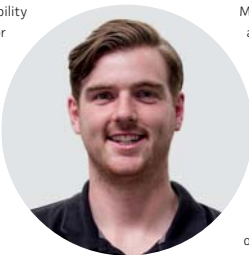
► who will represent their country at international level, we fully intend to produce winners and podium finishers at local, national and international level.

"Take a look at the Winter Olympics, where we achieved five medals. How many competitors did we send and how many could we have sent if they had been trained at a WESPA facility, with specific strength and conditioning sessions? We enable an athlete to have the ability to transfer their skills to different disciplines, for example gymnasts could become skiers."

WESPA's programme includes plyometrics, multi-directional movement, nutrition, psychology, strength and conditioning, education and lifestyle choices. "These programmes ensure that young people develop holistically, with skills that could be transferred to any sport," says Saverimutto.

Widening the net

In Australia, ESS Performance is achieving considerable success through its Athlete Development Programme (ADP), which offers strength and conditioning, injury rehabilitation and coaching mentorship to athletes from the age of 15.



Head of high performance at ESS, Matthew Taylor

Unless you're competing at the highest level, it's very difficult to gain access to world class training support. ESS makes this available to emerging athletes

Many athletes have gone on to achieve national and international success, including Adam Gotsis, who now plays for Denver Broncos in the NFL, Kathryn Mitchell, who has thrown javelin at two Olympics and won Gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, and Casey Wright, who has just competed in cross country skiing at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

ESS head of high performance Matthew Taylor says the main aim of the programme is to offer elite services to a broader population of emerging athletes. "In Australia, unless you're competing at the highest level in your chosen sport, it's very difficult to gain access to world class training support and facilities," says Taylor. "ESS offers the same training experiences and services usually reserved for the sporting elite, but makes them available to emerging



Despite their many successes, all the programmes are limited by finances. The costs involved will prevent some talent from being nurtured

Athletes at ESS undertake strength training that complements their chosen sport



and developing athletes, elite athletes without AIS (Australian Institute of Sport) representation and clients looking for a results-based programme.

"Our approach is to ensure each individual receives the appropriate coaching and programming to suit their stage of development, address their areas for improvement and complement the sport they compete in."

Sessions run daily and are tailored to the needs of the individuals. They include corrective exercises to help them move better, as well as skills block focusing on either speed, acceleration, change of direction or jumping skills, as well as flexible recovery exercises. Some athletes also undertake resistance training.

"Our programme enables us to address key areas that may be holding an athlete back from achieving sporting success. For some, this is developing strength or preventing injury and for others it's simply improving their technique and coordination," says Taylor.

Issues and challenges

Despite their many successes, all the programmes have the limiting factor of finances. They are private programmes, which do not receive funding and have to be commercially viable. ESS Performance says its

Our programme addresses key areas that may be holding an athlete back from achieving sporting success

programmes cost less than a weekly personal training session, while Westway charges £105 per term for one session a week and £185 for two. Despite being good value for money, this is enough of a financial commitment to prevent some talent from being nurtured.

The other challenge is finding staff who are sufficiently qualified to teach strength training to children.

These issues aside, it's exciting to see this commitment to helping young athletes to achieve their sporting dreams. It will be interesting to see the future impact, both in terms of talent produced and similar programmes inspired. ●

ITALIAN RUGBY AND WATTBIKE

PARTNER TO DRIVE NEW DIRECTION OF PRECISION AND PERFORMANCE

The Italian Rugby Federation (FIR) and Wattbike have announced a partnership with the aim to optimise the fitness, precision and performance of the Italian Rugby Team, Benetton Rugby and Zebre Rugby.

The partnership will see Wattbike and the FIR work closely together over the next 12 months to develop new training methodologies and analyse the impact the Wattbike can have on off-feet conditioning, rehabilitation and performance. This ground-breaking research will shape a new direction

for elite training and will impact the efficiency and precision of performance programmes across many sports.

Pete Atkinson, Head of Human Performance at FIR, comments: "Working with a technology and training partner such as Wattbike allows us to boost the National Team and helps us to efficiently train those players who need to offload following a match day, or those with a background of injury, in order to maintain the highest possible level of fitness.

"The intention is to develop the partnership and use Wattbike's bespoke knowledge of performance and elite sport



"We're on a journey to create a team that the nation can be proud of"

Conor O'Shea, Italian Rugby head coach



Italian Rugby is striving to step up the physical performance of its players

to help us prescribe specific sessions to our athletes. As we develop the partnership, Wattbike will send their staff to share information with our coaching teams on cycling fitness and the cross-training benefits of this to our sport-specific goals. It represents a great option to be smart, and more precise in our training."

As part of the collaboration, Wattbike has provided Italian Rugby with four Wattbike Pros and two Wattbike Trainers. Three of the bikes are based at the training ground at Benetton Treviso and the others are located with Zebre Rugby in Parma.

"Placing the bikes in this way gives the best possible exposure to the majority of players who make up the National Squad," Atkinson explains. "We are now working closely with Wattbike to enhance the precision and individual focus of rugby conditioning in Italy. There is a great

opportunity in this country for us to step up a number of levels in terms of our physical performance."

The Wattbike has already formed a crucial part of the elite conditioning training programme, with players using the bike for rehabilitation, recovery and key aerobic and anaerobic training.

Commenting on the partnership, Italian Rugby head coach Conor O'Shea adds: "We're on a journey to create a team that the nation can be proud of, and the partnership with Wattbike is an incredibly important element of this. We want to change perceptions and have the ability to prescribe individual training to maximise the potential of each of our players.

"The fundamentals are good, the players have ability and they are willing to work hard. We feel that if we can direct their efforts more precisely to maximise their own specific physical developments then the collective sum of all these improved parts will lead to a positive step change."

Predominantly the Wattbikes are currently being utilised with players who struggle to do consecutive training days on the field due to injuries or for players who are currently in rehabilitation.

From a player's perspective, Dean Budd, Italian National Second Row and captain at Benetton Treviso, adds: "My training and match performances have improved since



Wattbike is already forming a crucial part of the FIR elite conditioning programmes

© ITO SPORTS FOR HIM



"Over the past five years we have worked with top rugby players and teams from around the world"

Richard Baker, managing director, Wattbike

using the Wattbikes. They've enabled me to reach a higher fitness level and I've had fewer injuries this season thanks to the off-feet training. Sessions on the bikes are tough, but there's been a marked improvement in our performance and preparation."

Richard Baker, managing director at Wattbike, added, "Over the past five years we have worked with top rugby players and teams from around the world to understand the best ways the Wattbike can be used to enhance player performance.

"Having the opportunity to work with the FIR and be part of their journey to develop the competitiveness of their national team is something we are very

proud to be part of. We look forward to sharing our knowledge and training expertise as they seek to take the national team to the next level."

Wattbike and the FIR will be working together to research the different performance interventions over the next 12 months, and results will be released that will shape a new focus for elite training programmes. ●

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SLAM DUNK

Associated with urban culture and fast-paced entertainment, basketball is particularly popular with young people. CEO Stewart Kellett tells Steph Eaves how Basketball England is working to make the sport accessible to everyone



What's the unique appeal of the sport?

Basketball is a sport everyone can play informally. In fact, most kids play it at home when they start to throw, catch and run with a ball. It's a multi-generational opportunity for fun, and we want to convert this simple part of a child's physical literacy into playing basketball as they get older. There are thousands of outdoor courts that are free to use.

It's a sport that has scoring action around every 20-24 seconds, so it's never dull. It incorporates dimensions of music, fashion and celebrity interest. It's got a unique urban culture and reaches diverse communities.



What's the current level of participation?

The latest Sport England data shows 306,400 adults aged 16-plus play basketball at least twice a month. It's the third most popular team sport in the country, after football and cricket. And it's even more popular among young people – one in four teenagers has played basketball at least once a month in the last year.



Elite Academy Basketball League is the premier junior competition in the UK

Basketball participation numbers have remained static over the last decade, but now we're seeing an increase in our membership, with more people playing for fun, as well as seeking competitive opportunities. There was a rise from 30,000 to 33,000 over the last two seasons, and data for this season suggests another rise for 2017/18 of 3,000 participants.

This is great news for us, particularly as the majority of the growth is among young players.

How are you growing the grassroots?

We have a number of initiatives in place. Our most successful is the Satellite Clubs programme. This is funded by Sport England and we work with registered clubs and deliverers to provide basketball training and playing opportunities at a time and venue convenient to casual players. Maybe they can't travel to a traditional club training session or maybe club training isn't what they want – this gives them an opportunity to play basketball in a welcoming, relaxed environment.

As part of our Satellite Clubs provision, we're one of the leading governing bodies making our game accessible to young people with disabilities. Over 680 players with a disability accessed the programme in 2016/17 across 38 sites in England. The best part is that with all the sessions, the Satellite Club programme offers another avenue for clubs to increase their participation base.

How are you getting more young people involved in the sport?

We run a youth participation competition in partnership with the National Basketball Association (NBA) called the Jr. NBA Basketball England Leagues. We currently run four leagues – Manchester and Birmingham and two in London: a co-ed and a female-only league.

There are 30 schools in each league at Year 7 age (11-12-year-olds) and each school is 'drafted' to one of



“ For the first time, the 3x3 version of basketball will be included in the Commonwealth Games in 2022

the 30 NBA teams. They get a playing strip for their drafted club and play their season in it. Each league has a series of play-offs and finals that make the competition special. In addition, a handful of lucky schools can access the NBA London Game or attend clinics that feature NBA Legends like Andre Miller, Dikembe Mutombo and John Amaechi. It's an exciting programme that introduces young people to basketball in an engaging way.

Alongside NBA commissioner Adam Silver, we announced an expansion to the leagues in January, allowing us to grow the programme. We'll be widening our footprint to incorporate leagues elsewhere in the country and leagues for Year 8 pupils, as well as working with select primary schools. By 2021, expansion should be in full swing with the programme reaching 8,000 children.

How do you plan to grow participation?

Over our current four-year funding cycle, our target is to increase the number of people playing regularly by 10,000, with 8,000 of those playing weekly. We're doing this in a number of ways; firstly, by improving competitions to ensure players have an enjoyable, accessible and competitive experience that's affordable and manageable.

We're reviewing the travel involved for junior leagues to make them more appealing to young people (and parents). We're also looking to make games more competitive, to ensure people aren't put off by one-sided games.

In addition, we're working with Walking Basketball to engage older people returning to the sport.

Are you building more facilities?

Yes, investing in facilities will ensure everyone can access basketball. Over the past two years we've seen enquiries relating to new facility build and investment increase, which is a good sign of potential growth. ➤



The Jr. NBA leagues for Year 7 students comprise co-ed and female-only leagues



Basketball England plans to increase female participation over the next four years



New basketball arenas are being built in conjunction with professional clubs, including Leicester and Worcester and Newcastle

- Our National Basketball Performance Centre in Manchester, completed in 2016, is a world-class environment for the sport and new arenas have been or are being built in conjunction with professional clubs including Leicester, Worcester, Essex and Newcastle.

We're working on a facility strategy with a number of stakeholders to ensure that we have the right standards of, and access to, facilities at recreational, club, talent and performance levels. The strategy will highlight technical guidance for investors and providers, along with a framework for how Basketball England and our partners are working to build a better infrastructure and leverage resources in each English region. We'll be publishing the strategy this summer.

How is talent identified and nurtured from grassroots to elite?

We've recently completed a global research programme – the Basketball Development Model – to identify the best ways to introduce people to the competitive game and to develop their talent.

Over 100 experts have contributed to the research and we're now preparing to implement a new talent system to take people from clubs to elite level. It will reflect best practice in the sport while accommodating cultural factors that can affect participation and development. We'll be making this change over the next two years.

How accessible is basketball?

We promote basketball as a sport accessible to everyone. It's particularly popular among lower socio-economic groups when compared with many other sports, and we're really keen to grow this aspect of the sport even further, particularly among young people.

We make sure our programmes are taking place in areas where young people from all backgrounds have the chance to take part. Over the next four years, we're looking to increase the proportion of members who come from the 20 per cent most deprived areas from 17 to 20 per cent, and the percentage of women and girls playing from 20 to 25 per cent.

How are you overcoming challenges to participation?

We have a two-pronged strategy to grow participation. The first part is retention. Around 1 million children play basketball regularly in school, and around 25 per cent of these also play outside school. However, by the age of 16 many of these young people have stopped playing, with many more dropping out by 21.



Basketball England is keen to promote basketball as accessible to all



Basketball is the third most popular team sport in the country, after football and cricket

We're looking at finding ways to tap into their motivations and reduce the barriers that create drop-out so we can keep people in the sport for longer. We know sometimes life gets in the way, particularly when young people leave school, so we need to support them to keep playing when they no longer have that education support system around them. We also know cost can be a barrier, so we're keen to ensure basketball remains affordable for all who would like to play.

To attract new participants, we want to create more awareness of the fun and benefits of the sport and make it easier to join in at a recreational level. We also want to renew interest if people have played before. We've added a new club finder feature to our website, and are promoting more recreational and outdoor basketball, including the relatively new 3x3 format, which involves two teams of three playing on one hoop.

Tell us about your partnership working

We have an excellent partnership with the NBA, with which we deliver the Junior NBA leagues. We also work closely with AoC Sport and BUCS to deliver competition opportunities in further and higher education.

We're strengthening our partnerships with colleges and universities across the country to help build and sustain our new talent and enterprise hubs. We plan to establish a hub in each of our 10 designated regions over the next two years. These hubs will give the student workforce a chance to contribute to the sport and gain

“ Our next aim is to upgrade the technical, coaching and sports science aspects of basketball

experience for their own career development, while helping to grow the game at a grassroots level.

Our next partnership development phase is to secure additional income, including sponsorship, to support growth in the community game, and to help us upgrade the technical, tactical, coaching and sports science/sports medicine aspects of basketball.

How do major events affect participation?

We're excited about April's Commonwealth Games in Australia and the opportunities it presents. For the first time since 2006, basketball is on the Games' framework. We're working hard to ensure teams are well prepared, and to give all 24 players the opportunity to increase their profiles and become role models and ambassadors.

The Commonwealth Games coming to Birmingham in 2022 is also a massive opportunity for the sport. For the first time ever, the 3x3 format of the game has been included. This gives us three years to develop our 3x3 offer to increase interest and understanding of the game. Hopefully this will help to make 3x3 one of the hottest tickets at the Commonwealth Games! ●

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Lauren Heath-Jones takes a look at the latest technology and innovation currently making waves across the world of sport



For full company and contact details of any of the products and services featured here, please visit www.sport-kit.net

Replay's PitchPassport 365 'streamlines operations', says **Garry Martin**



The app features online and offline functionality

UK-based synthetic turf maintenance specialist Replay has launched PitchPassport 365, a new tool that includes an app and online platform, which the company claims is set to 'revolutionise' the recording and traceability of synthetic turf maintenance.

It is designed to enable communications between the manufacturer, installer, maintainer and the facility, allowing them to input historical, current and predictive maintenance information about the turf. The information



Garry Martin,
Replay managing director

gathered can then be used to identify and resolve minor maintenance issues before they become major concerns.

Heat mapping technology is a key feature, using an embedded algorithm to produce a map of the pitch depicting areas of wear and tear.

Garry Martin, Replay managing director, says: "We now have a tool that not only streamlines our operations but offers tracking and traceability of works that has never previously been available. This enhances health, safety and asset protection and removes grey areas and burden of proof."

SPORT-KIT KEYWORD
REPLAY

Murfitt's PRO-gran offers a more 'enjoyable playing experience', says **Mark Murfitt**

Murfitt's, a UK-based manufacturer of artificial sports pitches, has developed PRO-gran, a new infill for artificial pitches that is

designed to improve the lifespan of the pitch, as well as eliminate environmental and player health risks.

PRO-gran is a black rubber crumb artificial turf infill, made

from rubber reclaimed from recycled tires, and coated in polyurethane. It is engineered to offer a superior playing experience, due to lower surface temperatures and effective drainage. It also has no aroma, no airborne particles and almost no splashing.

In addition, the infill has undergone rigorous testing to ensure it meets EU standards, and is 100 per cent safe for the environment.

Mark Murfitt, founder and managing director, says: "We offer a product that not only eliminates any concern about



Mark Murfitt, founder and managing director

player or public health, but also creates a more enjoyable playing experience."

Murfitt adds: "The feedback we've had so far has been incredibly positive."

SPORT-KIT KEYWORD
MURFIT'S



The infill is designed to improve the pitch's lifespan

Steve Savage on Garran Lockers installation at USW

The University of South Wales (USW) has opened a new £15 m (US\$21m, €16.9m) sports facility close to the Pontypridd campus in Rhydyfelin, South Wales.

The new sports park, which provides training

equipment and facilities for students and athletes alike, features a strength and conditioning centre, observation galleries, a full size 3G pitch and changing rooms.

The project was presided over by construction company

Kier Construction, who commissioned Garran Lockers to design, manufacture and install bespoke storage lockers and changing room equipment.

The company fitted custom lockers, bench seating, cloakroom units and hookboards in red, white and black, USW's official colour scheme.

Additionally Garran Lockers supplied and fitted a number of water-resistant lockers in wet areas. The lockers, from Garran's supreme range, are powder-coated and made from 1.5mm aluminium. They're designed to prevent rust and corrosion.

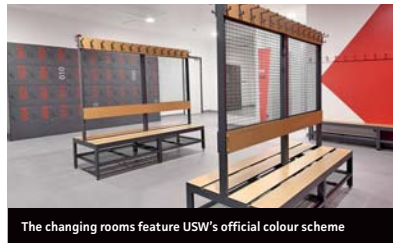
Steve Savage, sport and business development



Steve Savage, USW sport and business development manager

manager at the University, says: "We are extremely pleased with everything that Garran provided, the lockers look phenomenal and match the high-quality specification that we required."

SPORT-KIT KEYWORD
GARRAN LOCKERS



The changing rooms feature USW's official colour scheme

Aston Villa's new contactless technology gives fans 'the best experience possible', says Luke Organ

Aston Villa Football Club has become the first in the world to integrate pre-paid contactless and chip and pin payment technology into its season and member cards. The technology behind the new integrated payment and stadium access

card is provided by interactive data platform FortressGB.

The technology will enable fans to use their cards to make contactless payments up to £30, with customers earning 'Pride Rewards' points which can be used to buy club merchandise and other items.

Fans will also be able to use their cards to gain entry to Villa Park stadium and all of its payment terminals.

"We're committed to giving fans the best experience possible when dealing with the club," says Luke Organ, chief commercial officer at Aston Villa FC.

"The new contactless, chip and pin technology will ensure they can buy



Fans will be able to use the cards at the ground or high street

merchandise and refreshments at the ground on match day, or on the high street with our affiliate retail partners – all the time earning points."

Traditionally, season and member cards are restricted to stadium access and online members benefits but by introducing the integrated payment capability, the

club will gain access to more data about the shopping habits of card holders.

Organ adds: "Our corporate partners and other high street retailers will leverage the buying power of the significant Aston Villa fan base." ●

SPORT-KIT KEYWORD
FORTRESS GB



Luke Organ, chief commercial officer at Aston Villa FC

The Sports and Play Construction Association, SAPCA, is the recognised

trade organisation for the sports and play facility construction industry in the UK. SAPCA fosters excellence, professionalism and continuous improvement throughout

the industry, in order to provide the high quality facilities necessary for the success of British sport. SAPCA represents a wide range of specialist constructors of natural and synthetic sports surfaces, including both outdoor and indoor facilities, from

tennis courts and sports pitches to playgrounds and sports halls. SAPCA also represents manufacturers and suppliers of related products, and independent consultants that offer professional advice on the development of projects.

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