

News in brief

Staccato reports from the cultural typeface

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Laura launches wish-list

Professor Laura McAllister has unveiled her ambitions as the new chair of the Sports Council for Wales – soon to be known as Sport Wales – which include the aspiration to see “all children in Wales hooked on sport for life”, even aspiring harpists. The former Welsh football international stepped into the job at the beginning of February and she reckoned recently that she is eager to see sport’s place at the heart of Wales and its culture championed right across the board. “You only have to walk around the park on a Saturday to see how much sport is part of the Welsh psyche,” she explained, adding, “Often though, we don’t always appreciate sport’s wider contribution – how sport can foster national pride and a feel-good factor or bring about social cohesion to communities, for example. It’s role in preventative health care is enormous yet it doesn’t always get that recognition.”

PAC launches strategy for physical activity

As February drew to a close 120 representatives of community groups, sports clubs and voluntary groups gathered in the hallowed halls of Thomas Lord’s cricket ground in London to mark the launch of Pro Active Camden’s (PAC) sport and physical activity strategy. PAC is one of the 33 community sport and physical activity networks (CSPANS) in the capital and includes among its members Camden Council, NHS Camden, Greenwich Leisure Limited, Central YMCA, Jubilee Halls, Voluntary Action Camden, Volunteer Centre Camden, SportsAid, UCLU (UCL Student’s Union), London Sports Forum for Disabled People and Pro-Active Central London. Former sports minister and current chair of the London community sports board, Kate Hoey, spoke of London’s ambition for an Olympic grassroots legacy and John Carrier, chair of NHS Camden, illustrated his commitment to selling physical activity as a key role for the NHS and its partners. To date PAC has led the implementation of eight outdoor gyms, the development of a virtual sports academy, improved support for volunteers, establishment of a sports ambassadors network and the implementation of the ‘Give it a Go’ scheme, an initiative aimed at removing barriers to participation in low income groups. PAC hopes that its work will see participation rates climb above the current level of 27% in this part of the Olympic City.
• Find details of PAC online at www.camden.gov.uk/pro-active

Merseyside’s coaches get funding boost

Coaches in Merseyside will be able to claim up to 60% of coaching course and qualification fees thanks to an initiative called Get Qualified North West. Funding from the European Social Fund and the Learning and Skills Council is being used to help individuals achieve qualifications across the sport, outdoors, and health and fitness sectors. Workforce development manager at Merseyside Sports Partnership, Andrew Wileman, said, “There’s never been a better time to get qualified if you are already a coach delivering sport in Merseyside. By professionalising the industry we aim to make coaching a more desirable career option, provide the public with better access to quality coaching and give our future sporting champions the best chances of success.”

Your round, Darling

The Leisure Review has been one of many industry institutions to welcome the appointment of John Healey MP to lead the government’s new working party on pubs. Chief executive of the British Beer and Pub

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Lord’s: the PAC getting active in Camden



Merseyside coaches: getting qualified

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Association, Brigid Simmons, spoke for many when she said, "It's time for the chancellor to recognise the social, community and economic value of a low-strength drink like beer and social drinking in pubs. The appointment of John Healey as minister for pubs is a welcome sign that the government is listening to public concerns about beer tax and pub closures. Pubs are at the heart of our community and make a significant contribution to our economy. It is time to give beer a break and show that the government is serious about backing the British pub." Staff at TLR have pledged to do all they can to support the pub as an institution.

Aussie bollocks could win awards

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) has put an early bid in for both the 'Stating the Bleeding Obvious' and the 'What Did They Just Say?' awards at the 2010 TLR industry awards for a report based on research undertaken by the Centre for the Built Environment and Health within the University of Western Australia's school of population health. The report suggests that "a childhood that is primarily sedentary and spent indoors can lead to poorer physical and mental health outcomes", which we think we knew, and goes on: "The evidence surrounding the nexus between parks and open space and children has been somewhat scattered to date. This report and the conceptual model presented sought to consolidate what is currently available. Similarly, there is a diverse array of sectors, agencies, community groups, researchers and policy makers to whom this issue is pertinent; including many whose core business may not be children and youth per se, but whose role impacts on the built and natural environment. There is considerable scope for further communication and collaboration among these players, and untapped synergies between parks and open space that make good design sense, foster a sense of community and help to enhance the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia." Right. Got you.

Graded kids make for finer fun*

According to a report in Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper, the Australian Rugby League (ARL) is considering the reintroduction of grading by weight for junior players, the system they used up until the early 1970s. The issue has been precipitated by the rise in Sydney's Polynesian community and the fact that children are simply larger these days. The issue is being called a "silent threat" to rugby league junior player numbers, with many parents pulling children from the code because of the toll of collisions with children who can weigh up to 50kg more. Whether this approach finds favour elsewhere in rugby league, in rugby union or in any other sport where physicality is prized waits to be seen.

**With apologies to anyone who actually remembers Home Pride flour ads from the seventies.*

The link between the arts and the environment: hoping to survive

The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW) reports quasi-positive news in its continuing fight for survival. The centre, which uses the arts to show how we can live more sustainably within nature and includes year-round free exhibitions, workshops, events and activities for school and community groups as part of its programme, launched an urgent appeal for funding following an unsuccessful application to the Arts Council for the continuation of its grant funding. Seeking to raise £20,000, CCANW reports that it has got halfway up its totaliser but still needs the other ten grand if it is to survive beyond 31 March. You can find out more about CCANW and its work, and make a donation, at www.ccanw.co.uk/

High Tide approaching

And if the link between the arts and the environment is up your street as we went to press with the March issue of The Leisure Review there was still just time to see the High Tide exhibition titled Mersey Basin at Liverpool John Moores University, which runs until 19 March. This is a cross-disciplinary exhibition bringing together newly commissioned work by 11 UK-based artists, all of which explores the themes of rising sea level and flooding from a regional perspective in the broader context of climate change. Further details online at www.hightideuk.org

Ashton Gate environs

Bristol City FC's new £60 million stadium has received a "minded to approve" majority verdict from the local council's planning committee, although its green-belt location means that the scheme will now be

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referred to the secretary of state who will consider whether an inquiry is merited. Scheduled for completion in 2012, the stadium is situated in the Ashton Vale area of the city, just a kilometre from the team's current home at Ashton Gate, and will have a 30,000 capacity which could be expanded to 42,000 if England hosts the World Cup in 2018. According to project managers Capita Symonds, the stadium will be a "24-7 venue" capable of holding concerts, conferences, banquets and trade shows. It will also serve as a hub for "community-led enterprises". Bristol City chief executive Colin Sexstone said of the planning decision, "It's a good result. A few extra things have been added in and we'll have to look at that closely. The positive side is we've got through this big hurdle. There are a few more to go, but this is good news."

Next with the flame: progress according to London 2012

Links of London has become an official licensee of London 2012, creating the official jewellery collection of London 2012. Cladding on the international broadcast centre has been completed and the main press centre has reached its full height. First Group, based in Aberdeen, are the preferred bidder to provide hundreds of buses and coaches to transport spectators during the Games. The London 2012 "sailing community" will be housed in a new 77-unit, low-carbon housing development being built at Officer's Field, Osprey Quay in Portland. Archbishop Desmond Tutu visited the Olympic Park site and expressed his belief that the London 2012 Games will inspire people across the world. Three of the eleven residential plots in the Olympic Village are now structurally complete. John Lewis has become "the official department store provider to London 2012".

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