

# RETAIL DESTINATION

SEPTEMBER 2019  
FORMERLY SHOPPING CENTRE MAGAZINE

THE BUSINESS OF RETAIL

## DESIGNING OUT CAR PARK CRIME



### Customer Service

Capital & Regional rolls out more dedicated family areas across its portfolio

### Parking

Technology drives growth of Park & Ride facilities

### Technology

URW signs global partnership with VR startup the Void



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## EDITOR'S LETTER

The stock markets are giving retail property companies a hammering, with Intu shares down 75% in a year and Hammerson down 50%. And short-sellers who target companies where they expect the share price to fall have NewRiver in their sights.

When the tide is flowing against you it's hard to make headway but both Hammerson and Intu have unveiled plans to rebuild their balance sheets through asset disposals, particularly of overseas projects, and by diversifying the occupier mix on their sites.

Hammerson has started to put flesh on the bones on its City Quarters concept with planning applications for the redevelopment of the Martineau Galleries site in Birmingham and for land adjoining Victoria Gate in Leeds. Broadmead in Bristol could follow soon. The schemes are notable for their relative lack of retail, as Hammerson looks to capitalise on the strong markets for office space and multifamily housing in regional cities.

And the completion of the leisure extension at intu Lakeside is just the first of many projects to update and diversify intu's UK malls.

The question is, will shareholders' patience run out before management have the time to implement these laudable, but inevitably medium- and long-term strategic changes?

**Graham Parker**  
Editor, Retail Destination



## NEWS & ANALYSIS

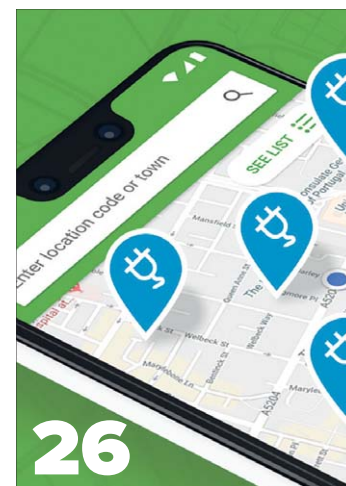
- 04** Hammerson ramps up City Quarters rollout
- 06** Covent Garden to float
- 08** Intu doubles down on Upside Down
- 10** Values on the slide
- 12** Edinburgh St James's capital vision
- 14** Crown Estate completes Rushden Lakes

## FEATURES

- 18** **CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
Capital & Regional rolls out more dedicated family areas across its portfolio
- 26** **PARKING**  
Technology drives growth of Park & Ride facilities

## REGULARS

- 36** **TECH**  
URW signs global partnership with VR startup the Void
- 40** **DATA**  
Retail facts & figures
- 42** **PEOPLE**  
Festival Place reaches for the stars with orchestral experience



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# HAMMERSON RAMPS UP CITY QUARTERS ROLLOUT

## Hammerson has submitted plans for the first two major City Quarters schemes in Birmingham and Leeds.

In Birmingham, Hammerson has submitted a planning application to the city council for the regeneration of its 7.5 acre Martineau Galleries site which includes the Square shopping centre, Dale End car park and 1-7 Dale End. Proposals include the delivery of new homes and up to 1.4m sq ft of workspace as well as a new city centre hotel, restaurants and cafes.

And in Leeds Hammerson has applied to redevelop a site adjacent to its flagship destination, Victoria Gate, with a 14-storey hotel featuring 205 spacious rooms, an on-site

gym and conferencing facilities. Hammerson also owns a 10 acre site just north of Victoria Leeds which will be brought forward for development in due course, creating a new mixed-use City Quarters neighbourhood.

Robin Dobson, UK director of development and project management at Hammerson said: "City Quarters is all about creating thriving, mixed-use environments where people can live, work and relax in exceptional neighbourhoods, adjacent to our flagship destinations. Hammerson has a strong track record of delivering the places where people want to be, and this expertise will be applied to our City Quarters developments to create exciting, vibrant spaces in the UK's very best cities."



## £168M INTU LAKESIDE EXTENSION UNVEILED

Intu has released details of a further extension to Intu Lakeside in Thurrock, Essex, as the new leisure project reaches completion.

The proposals submitted to Thurrock Council include the part demolition of the existing Debenhams anchor store to create new retail, F&B and leisure units. Existing units would also be extended into the car park with the lost spaces replaced in a new multi-storey car park. At the same time the existing bus station would be demolished to be replaced by a new facility linked to Chafford Hundred rail station.

Coupled with recently revealed plans for new residential units adjoining the centre, the new plans form part of a strategy to turn Intu Lakeside from a shopping centre into a regional town centre.

The initial plans include intensive landscaping and

public realm development to create new spaces for alfresco dining and outdoor events.







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### OAK MALL BLOSSOMS

Lunar Greenock has signed five new lettings at Oak Mall, Greenock, including gifts and stationery chain The Works, which has taken 5,500 sq ft, and value retailer Poundstretcher which will occupy 8,000 sq ft both on five-year leases. Vapourhnm has taken a 700 sq ft unit, Oak News 1,600 sq ft and American Candy 2,000 sq ft. At the same time Santander and TUI have renewed their existing leases for a further 10 and five years respectively. Letting agents are Ryden and Reith Lambert.

### SUN SHINES ON HIGHCROSS

Hammerson has lodged an application with Leicester City Council to install 881 photo-voltaic panels on four locations on the roof of the Highcross shopping centre. The landlord has already added solar panels to its Westquay site in Southampton and at Victoria Gate in Leeds. The application says: "The system has been designed the generation of renewable energy at the site. It's estimated 100 per cent of the energy generated will be used within the shopping centre."

### D&D DEBUTS IN BRISTOL

Hammerson has signed D&D London to launch a new 13,000-sq ft restaurant and events venue within the landmark Quakers Friars piazza at its flagship destination in Bristol, Cabot Circus. This will be D&D's second venture with Hammerson, and follows the openings of Issho and East 59th at Victoria Gate, Leeds in 2017. The venue, which is set to open in early 2020, will contain new concepts developed for the building including a landmark restaurant, bars, extensive private dining and a large outdoor terrace. The restaurant and bars will be contained within the listed 18th century Friary Building. Existing tenant Brasserie Blanc will vacate the building in September.

## COVENT GARDEN TO FLOAT

**Capital & Counties is to float off its Covent Garden estate as a standalone REIT after its performance was dragged down by the troubled redevelopment of the Earls Court exhibition centre in west London.**

In a Stock Exchange announcement the company said: "Covent Garden London will be a central London focused REIT which owns and manages the Covent Garden estate, in the heart of London's West End.

"This world-class mixed-use estate has a rich heritage, situated around the historic Covent Garden Market Building

and Piazza, adjacent to the iconic Royal Opera House. Covent Garden is a highly attractive and globally recognised destination for occupiers and consumers. This carefully accumulated group of assets has provided, and the board believes will continue to provide, a source of long-term growth in income and capital value. The business will be targeting a progressive dividend policy through income growth and cost discipline, to deliver long-term sustainable returns."

The assets were valued at £2.8bn at 30 June 2019 and Capco intends to complete before the end of 2019.



## BOXPARK UNVEILS GROWTH PLANS

**Pop-up mall operator Boxpark has revealed plans to open 10 new sites as well as rolling out two new formats. Currently trading in Shoreditch, Croydon and Wembley, the new plan will see the business expand across the UK. The first new site outside London will be an F&B-led scheme on Shoreham Beach, West Sussex.**

The new Box Office format will operate from structures of four to six storeys, offering between 50,000 and 150,000 sq ft of co-working space with a cinema-led leisure offer on the first floor and F&B at ground level. And the Box Hall format will provide up to 20,000 sq ft housing six to 12 F&B operators.

Boxpark founder and CEO Roger Wade said: "Boxpark has been an innovator in the retail and leisure sector, and these brand new formats demonstrate our investment in continuing to evolve both the brand and the sites we build and operate."

JLL has been retained to source sites.





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**STRATFORD REFINANCED**

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield has successfully refinanced Westfield Stratford City with a single-tranche £750m secured fixed rate bond, with a 7-year maturity and a 1.642% coupon. The coupon of the new bond is the lowest ever achieved in the real estate sector and compares with the existing commercial mortgage-backed security issued in 2014 and maturing in 2019, which had a 2.6925% fixed coupon.

**RIDINGS GETS REEL**

Reel Cinema, a new affordable family cinema concept, has opened as part of The Ridings shopping centre's new leisure offering. Landlord NewRiver has worked with Reel to repurpose three retail units, totalling approximately 11,650 sq ft on Cathedral Walk, the upper mall of the centre, opposite Boots. Reel Cinema Wakefield is the only cinema in the city centre and comprises five screens with each auditorium seating between 42 and 55 customers, suitable not only for film screenings but also parties, business and community events.

**MEADOWHALL NETS FOUR**

Four brands have signed leases at British Land's Meadowhall, Sheffield. Newbie, the Swedish lifestyle brand for children, will be opening a 900-sq ft store, one of its first to open in the UK outside of London and Lovisa, the fashionable jewellery specialist, will open a 700-sq ft shop featuring its latest fit-out concept. Meanwhile, home and body cosmetics brand, Rituals and fashion retailer, Hobbs have opened 1,000 and 2,000-sq ft stores respectively. Boots has also opened its second-ever beauty hall, its first outside of London at Meadowhall. British Land was advised by Smith Young and CBRE.

# INTU DOUBLES DOWN ON UPSIDE DOWN

**Six more Upside Down Houses are to launch at intu shopping centres following a successful trial at intu Lakeside. Upside Down House UK launched its first site in Bournemouth in 2018 but has now entered into an exclusive partnership to create the experience at some of intu's biggest destinations, including intu Trafford Centre, intu Metrocentre and intu Braehead.**

Each inverted two-storey house will feature a number of different upside-down rooms for customers to explore as part of their visit to an intu centre, with unique interior and exterior designs to reflect the character of its local surroundings.

The second is due to launch at intu Trafford Centre in August.

Roger Binks, customer experience director at intu, said: "The Upside Down House is a fun experience for all the family where your world is literally turned upside down. It has been a huge draw at intu Lakeside and perfectly complements the transformation of this much-loved centre into a place to relax, unwind, eat, play and shop. We run some of the country's most popular retail destinations so really see its potential to thrive at intu's high footfall locations across the UK."



# LINCOLN LETTINGS

**Lincolnshire Co-op's £70m mixed-used redevelopment of the Cornhill Quarter in Lincoln has attracted four more retailers taking 13,115 sq ft out of the total 150,000 sq ft.**

The most recent letting is to Neon Sheep taking 1,711sq ft, along with a 1,600-sq ft handmade Doughnotts' branch, a 2,500-sq ft Seasalt and a 7,304-sq ft Energie Fitness. This also follows earlier signings to 200 Degrees and HMV.

Lincolnshire Co-op chief executive Ursula Lidbetter said:

"The Cornhill Quarter is continuing to attract exciting brands for the city; we have been able to announce a number of names over the past few months which all bring something different and create an attractive mix for Lincoln. We are confident in our vision to create a destination for residents and tourists alike which is also the gateway to Lincoln city centre."

Lincolnshire Co-op was represented by KLM Retail and Banks Long & Co.



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# VALUES ON THE SLIDE

**A**s leading REITs reported their half-year results shopping centre valuations are under growing pressure. And shareholders continued to ramp up pressure on management. As Retail Destination went to press Intu shares were trading at just 39p, down from 161p a year ago. Hammerson shares were trading at 226p, down from 492p a year ago.

Intu reported its portfolio valuation had fallen to £8.375bn as at 30 June 2019, a like-for-like reduction of 9.6% from £9.167bn a year previously. Valuers reported a 23bps outward yield shift reflecting weakening investor sentiment coupled with a 4.1% fall in ERVs reflecting the higher level of administrations and CVAs.

For Intu the biggest threat is that falling values place it in danger of breaching its loan-to-value covenants, at which point lenders could demand restructuring of loan terms or even initiate repossessions. The need to raise capital is becoming pressing and the company said asset disposals were a priority. The sale of a 50% stake in Intu Derby to a Kuwaiti investor for £186.3m marked the start of this process and the company's Spanish portfolio is widely expected to be sold.

Recently appointed chief executive Matthew Roberts said in his first formal report to shareholders: "The first half of 2019 has been challenging for Intu. We have experienced further downward pressure on like-for-like net rental income and property values resulting from a higher level of administrations and CVAs as some retailers struggle to remain relevant in a multichannel world.

"These challenges, facing Intu and the whole sector, have been well-documented and, while there are no quick fixes, I am confident that we can address them head on. Over the past nine months we have carried out the most comprehensive review of the business that Intu has ever undertaken.

"We know radical transformation is required and have developed a new, ambitious five-year strategy to reshape our business and address the challenges we face, with a priority to fix our balance sheet. With the people changes we have made, we



now have the right leadership team in place with the appropriate skill sets to deliver this plan and drive the business forward."

Similarly, Hammerson reported a 9.1% fall in value of its flagship UK shopping centres, which the company attributed to "continuing market uncertainty and a slowdown in leasing." However, Hammerson's resilient outlets business continued to grow, which meant its overall valuation deficit was lower.

Again, the company unveiled turnaround strategies that involved disposing of assets to repay debt and bolster the balance sheet as well as longer-term plans to broaden the mix of uses at its sites by developing surrounding land with residential and other uses.

In France, Hammerson exchanged contracts with AXA Investment Managers - Real Assets for the sale of a 75% stake in





the Parisian shopping destination Italic Deux, and the forward sale of 75% of the Italik extension for a total of £423m.

The total sale price represented a discount of 8.5% to the December 2018 book value and was marginally below end of June 2019 book value, implying that the slump in shopping centre values is by no means restricted to just the UK.

The deal takes Hammerson's total disposals in 2019 to £456m, meaning it is over 90% of the way to its £500m target for the year. This follows the sale of £33m of retail park assets in the first half of the financial year.

Chief executive David Atkins said: "Our number one priority is to reduce debt and build balance sheet strength. We are in advanced negotiations on additional asset sales and the creation of this joint venture once again highlights the appetite for investors to partner with skilled sector specialists."

Even global shopping giant Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield felt the chill winds of market sentiment affecting its UK operations. The like-for-like value of its two UK shopping centres decreased by -6.3%, of which -5.1% was driven by yield impact and -1.2% driven by rent impact. The decrease was felt most strongly at Westfield London where leasing progress on the 600,000-sq ft extension, which opened in March 2018, has been slower than expected.

However, in a vote of confidence of URW's flagship centres, the company was able to refinance Westfield Stratford City with a £750m secured fixed rate 7-year bond, bearing an interest rate of just 1.642%. This is the lowest ever rate achieved in the real estate sector and compares with the previous loan on the property, dating from 2014, which carried a 2.6925% fixed rate.



# 13 MONTHS TO GO

**Why Edinburgh  
St James will  
be more than  
just a centre.**









It is baffling that a city that brings in as much tourism as Edinburgh could have gone this long without a proper destination shopping centre. The retail offer in the city is mainly contained on Princes Street and those parallel to it (Rose Street and George Street), and while all the usual big names have a presence on the strip, the flow of the shopping street is hindered by a punctuation of busy through-roads, a stop-start bus network and the controversial tram system. And that's not to mention that being a historic city full of protected buildings has made it difficult for retailers to find a space that suits their needs.

The Edinburgh St James project was always going to be an ambitious one. It has been disruptive to say the least, between its construction and the ongoing extension of the tram network down to Leith, traffic passing by the site has been in a state of upheaval for years now. But it is something that the city has desperately needed, and after several years of construction, the vision is beginning to come to life, and it looks as if it will be worth the wait.

"It's the future of retail," says Martin Perry, director of development at Edinburgh St James. "It's the fact you've got other uses integrating with it – events, experiences, relationships that occur between partners that allow that to happen. We don't think that the model of opening a shopping centre and putting shop after shop next to it is the future because the consumer has moved away from that to some degree. The integration of digital is something that we've been grappling with for some time as an industry. What we're trying to do is to say: 'how do you get something that is completely integrated into a physical environment?'"

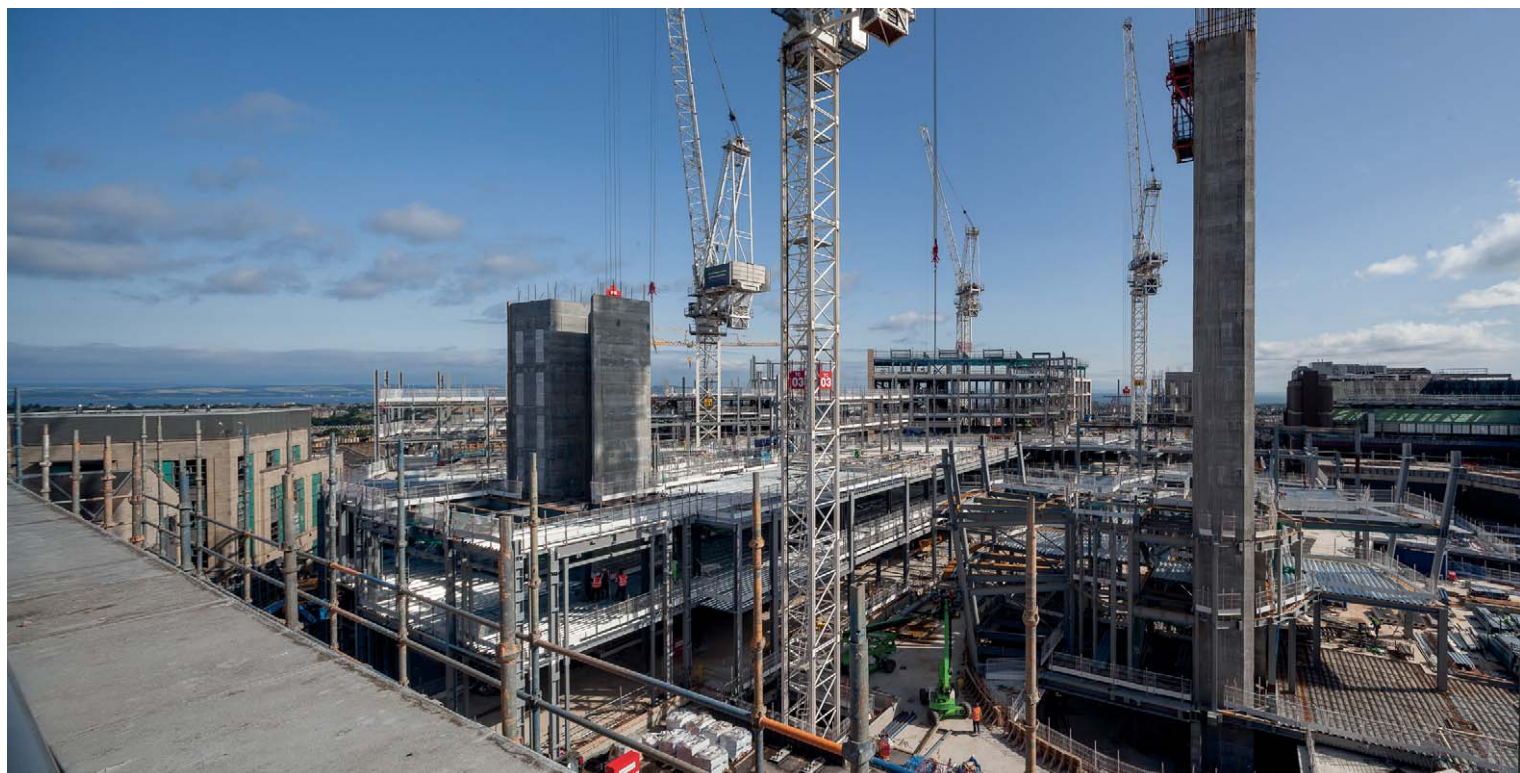
Upon completion, Edinburgh St James will be a 1.7m sq

ft, retail-led, mixed use destination. The £1bn scheme will comprise 850,000 sq ft of retail space, 30 restaurants including market hall and street-eats concepts, 152 apartments with panoramic views of the city, Edinburgh's first Everyman cinema, and the UK's second-ever W Hotel. The scheme is due for completion in 2020, with the retail units opening at this time and the rest of its offer launching with phased opening throughout the following year.

The covered scheme will span five floors. The floors are tiered and fit into the natural slope of the area, providing street-level entrances at different several different heights. The scheme is curved with very thin gallery depths to allow shoppers to have a clear view through the centre to see as many retailers as possible. The curve is designed to create a natural flow of foot traffic through the city centre which has been previously lacking.

It is a massive project and one of the biggest challenges has been finding people to do the work. "We knew that we were going to have to find 3,000 jobs," tells Perry, "but unlike other destinations, there were not a lot of unemployed people hanging around in need of work. We worked with the Scottish government and the council we have an initiative called Fuse which is a partnership approach. It nurtures people from school and people who are returning to work."

The Fuse initiative was established to help drive a world-class customer care experience in Edinburgh and promote the value and appeal of careers in the retail and hospitality sector, both in the city and internationally, by providing support, best practice and training. It is being delivered as part of the Growth Accelerator Model (GAM) agreement between Edinburgh St James, the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government.







Post development, the scheme is forecast to achieve £2.5bn of consumer spend. The quality and breadth of its offer will help Edinburgh move up the UK retail rankings from 13th to eighth, increasing the city's market potential by 13%, bringing it into the top 1% of locations in Europe, above Copenhagen and Amsterdam.

"One of the things we've really been trying to do is understand the consumer. It's not something you can do easily here because so much of the shoppers are tourists because it doesn't fit the standard Mosaic profile," Perry says. "We had to work with Queen Margaret University who looked at all the different categories of people who would come here. You have to understand the traits of all the different tourists: what is their mentality? How do they behave? We've done a lot of work in getting these categories together and making sure that the mix you put into the scheme actually fits."

The development will integrate the city's existing shopping offer, including the adjacent OMNI centre, Harvey Nicks

and the aspirational offers on Multrees Walk. John Lewis has continued to trade throughout the construction period and will join up with the scheme upon delivery.

The pièce de résistance of the scheme from an aesthetic standpoint will be the luxurious W Hotel, designed by Jestico + Whiles, in conjunction with Allan Murray Architects. The design for the 12-storey hotel is a giant, bronze-coloured steel ribbon which spirals upwards to a peak which will give an unparalleled 360-degree view of the city. The high-end luxury hotel will house 244 guest rooms, including 42 suites and one 'Extreme Wow Suite', and an offer of 'cutting-edge cocktails and cuisine'.

The final ambitious pipeline project worth noting about the scheme is its online presence. "What we have looked at doing here is the creation of a complete virtual offer of exactly the same as the city centre will offer." Perry calls it more of an 'Amazon' than a retailer's online offer. He says it is 'the same scheme, but completely online'.

"[In theory,]" he elaborates, "if you went on there and said, 'I want a blue shirt', it would show you all the blue shirts that are available in the city centre, whether it's from Harvey Nichols or Zara etc. Then you can say 'I want that one, that one, and that one, all in three different sizes'. Then when you go to checkout all these items from the different will be in one basket, you'll only have to pay once. All the different retailers' websites are collated. You can then have it all delivered to St James where you can pick it up, try it on, and whatever doesn't fit you can return it immediately us and we do the rest."

The Edinburgh St James has come a long way from the drab, tired centre it used to be. Forecasts anticipate it will welcome 20 million visitors per year and is poised to capture the city's massive tourist market. It is one of the UK's best-connected cities, serving the UK's sixth-busiest airport which brings in 13 million passengers annually, as well as a thriving bus, tram and train network. It might just be the safest bet for a retail destination in a decade.

"These vast numbers of tourists aren't coming to Edinburgh St James, they're coming to Edinburgh," adds Perry. "They're not coming to Edinburgh to shop, they're coming for the culture. So we don't see it as Edinburgh St James. We see it as Edinburgh."





**T**he Crown Estate has opened two new retail and leisure phases at Rushden Lakes in Northamptonshire. The phases have brought 10 new retail brands, 14 cafes and restaurants, and five leisure and entertainment brands to the destination.

The West Terrace, a 154,000-sq ft leisure and dining destination, is home to a 14-screen Cineworld, including a 4DX screen (one of only 13 branches nationally to have this technology), a ScreenX, and an IMAX auditorium. West Terrace is also home to a number of other leisure brands, including Rock Up, Paradise Golf and 360 Play. Nando's, Five Guys, Zizzi and local brand Heavenly Deserts have also opened in the outdoor restaurant terrace.

Hannah Milne, director of the Crown Estate's regional portfolio, said the new leisure element was already having an impact on the scheme's performance. "The cinema opened on 28 June and since its opening we've seen a significant uplift in afternoon and evening footfall. It's about getting a balance so the centre is busy right through the day."

And Garden Square is a new 17,500 sq ft boutique retail extension, providing 10 new retail units around an attractive public square. The development has attracted a number of new and exciting brands, including Beaverbrooks, Skechers and Barbour.

Rushden Lakes was conceived by retail and leisure specialist LXB and the developer delivered the West Terrace under the

original agreement. However, the Crown Estate chose to develop Garden Square directly, increasing the level of landscaping and public realm to meet its own specifications. "Now that we own it all its very much for us to drive it forward," said Milne.

Rushden Lakes is set within 200 acres of protected Nene Wetlands reserve and brings together a diverse mix of retail, leisure and dining. The site is also home to the Nene Wetlands Visitor Centre operated by the Wildlife Trusts, offering visitors unique opportunities to experience the nature trails around the reserve.

Milne explained: "We set out to provide a different experience to other leisure schemes. The wetland visitor centre is an attraction in its own right. The future of retail and leisure destinations lies in providing something you can't do online and Rushden Lakes encapsulates that."

Rushden Lakes provides 450,000 sq ft of retail and leisure floorspace in total, and it has posted an overall 7.1% increase in like-for-like sales growth in the year to May 2019 and has welcomed over 10 million visitors since opening.

"We are taking a view for the future by being flexible," says Milne. "We are creating a diverse and appealing occupier mix and the high-quality environment makes it an appealing attraction."

She added: "Rushden Lakes is embedded into its community – destinations have to draw people from far afield as well as getting the local people really behind it. Independent brands are a key part of the mix – they're part of the community."





Now, Milne is looking to take the lessons of Rushden Lakes into other Crown Estate schemes. “We are looking at all our regional portfolio in the light of changing consumer behaviour,” she said.

For example at Fosse Park in Leicester, Milne said the development of the adjoining Everards Brewery site is being revised. “We have evolved the specification in terms of placemaking,” Milne said. “There will be far more greenery, wider walkways and an external children’s play area. The specification of the food court will be far superior to the retail parks of the past.”

And this process won’t stop at Fosse Park as the Crown Estate is looking at alternative uses for the land surrounding its retail units. “As car park use declines it opens up the potential for other uses such as leisure, co-working and, going forward, residential,” Milne said. “We’re focusing on them becoming mixed use strategic locations.”











# THE FAMILY ZONE

**Capital & Regional  
rolls out more  
family-dedicated  
areas at its centres**







Children are inevitable guests at shopping centres, whether they are there for a big day out with their family, or as tag-alongs as stressed out parents need to pick up a few things. While some parents can likely boast about their patient, well-behaved children, this is not a reality for a lot of families. The challenge for parents is to try and make the shopping trip a fun, exciting, and entertaining experience to keep their child's boredom at bay.

In response to this demand, Capital & Regional, owner-manager of a portfolio of community shopping centres, has reinforced its commitment to supporting local communities by investing in dedicated Family Zones across its portfolio. New Family Zones are to be a key part of an investment programme, underpinning its business plan to create and manage destinations that respond to the immediate needs of the local population, and position the centres at the heart of the communities they serve.

The initiative has seen significant progression across the portfolio and has been positively received by the local community. The £2m Family Zone at The Exchange Ilford, which was completed in 2018, is designed to create a complete customer journey targeted at local families, including a new dedicated parent parking zone, parent & baby facilities and a free children's soft-play area.

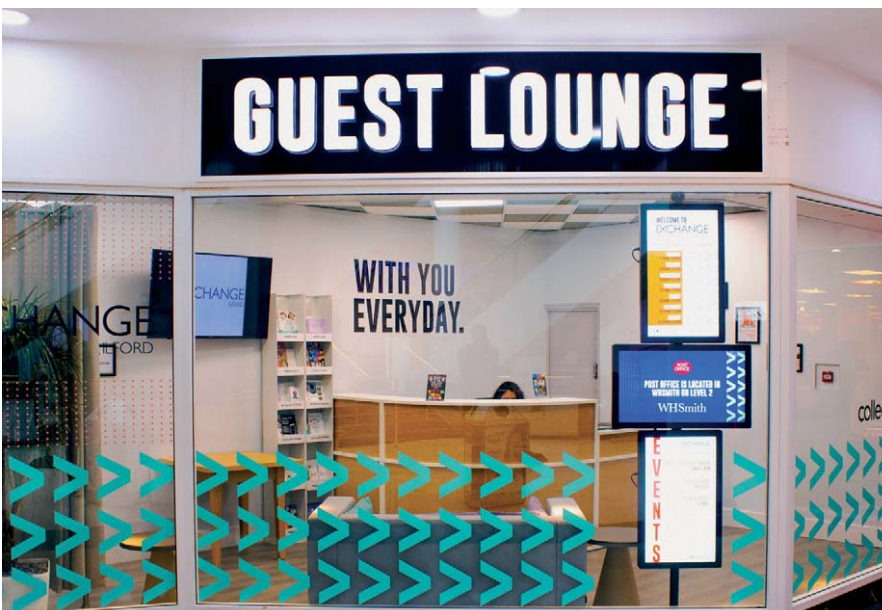
Its introduction contributed to a 1.4% increase in footfall between 2017 and 2018 and the frequency of visit has increased by 25%. Kidz Zone, a family-run children's clothing business, has seen a YTD sales growth of 16% since its relocation last year, as part of the Family Zone improvement plan.

As a result, the shopping centre attracted The Entertainer, the UK's largest independent toy store, which has signed a 10-year lease to occupy a 3,499-sq ft unit within the Family Zone. A complementary letting to Costa has also been added to the mix, taking an in-line unit within the Family Zone to increase family dwell time. The store is one of the first to have Costa's 'store of the future' fit-out.

"The Family Zones are an extension of our focus on community and our desire to deliver a needs-based offering at each of our centres," says Sara Jennings, director of guest and customer experience at Capital & Regional. "We first launched the concept in Exchange Ilford, where the 'family groups' demographic is 40% higher than the national average."

The aim was to create 'an effortless guest journey' for local families by creating a space focussed on their wants and needs, from the retailers that operate there through to improving access to family support amenities. The Family Zone in The Marlowes, for example, caters for the 68% of guests who bring





their children with them when they visit the centre to shop.

“The Family Zones in both Exchange Ilford and The Marlowes are a huge draw for local families as they offer a more convenient way to shop,” Jennings adds. “Since launching the Family Zones we’ve seen a significant increase in both footfall and frequency of visits at both centres.”

In terms of size, Family Zones are tailored to meet the needs of the local community and contain a mix of retail, leisure, food & beverage and family facilities and currently range in size from 18,500 to 32,600 sq ft.

In 2018, C&R invested in a fresh transformation of the guest experience at both Exchange Ilford and The Marlowes with the intention of making life easier for the families that visit the centres.

As well as upgrading the ambience, C&R installed new toilets and fully-equipped family rooms for parents with babies and toddlers. Both Family Zones contain a children’s soft-play concept for the centres’ younger guests, designed to provide a safe and educational space for children while parents can take a break. The reconfiguration of the Family Zone at Ilford has allowed Costa Coffee to be relocated next to the play area so parents can relax and look on while their kids explore.

And in September last year, C&R installed gold-award winning Changing Place facilities with state-of-the-art equipment that meets the needs of people with profound learning and physical disabilities.

“We’ve had encouraging feedback from our guests about the improved shopping experience,” Jennings says. “For many families in both Ilford and Hemel Hempstead the Family Zones are a staple of the weekly routine – they’ll come to the centre to shop or have lunch then the parents will enjoy a coffee while the kids play. The Family Zones are a prime example of our place at the heart of the communities that we serve.

She says that retailers have also seen a positive impact on sales since C&R implemented its improvement plan: “Kidz Zone, a family-run children’s clothing business, for example, has seen a year-to-date sales growth of 16 per cent since we relocated their unit to the Family Zone at Ilford last year.”

“We’re also seeing strong demand for space within the Family Zones from children and family retailers. Earlier this year The Entertainer signed a 10-year lease to occupy a 3,500 sq ft unit within the Family Zone at Ilford and is trading above expectations.”

And on the future of Family Zones, she says: “The first two Family Zones have been really successful, and we are currently reviewing the potential to incorporate the concept at the remainder of our centres within the portfolio.”

Capital & Regional CEO Lawrence Hutchings adds: “Our investment into vibrant Family Zones aims to create complementary family friendly uses in our shopping centres that aspire to serve the local community in the best way possible. Investing in our shopping centres allows us to meet the needs of our communities, which in turn increases footfall and maximises opportunities for our retail customers, creating a synergy beneficial for everyone involved.”



# CLICK, COLLECT, DELIVER, I'M YOURS

## Removing the burden of heavy bags

One of the biggest trials being faced by bricks and mortar retail is how to entice shoppers away from online marketplaces and into physical stores. Convenience is the biggest draw for the clicks over bricks shoppers as not everyone has the time to trawl for hours around the shops. But online shopping comes with its own drawbacks, the biggest one being missed deliveries. Which is where Click & Collect comes in: create your shopping basket online and pick it up in store at your next convenience.

Click & Collect is good for retailers because it gets shoppers in the door, and many of those coming to collect their package will also make additional purchases once they are in the store. But recent research conducted by Barclaycard and Decathlon has uncovered that one in seven Click & Collect purchases are never collected, resulting in £228m in uncollected and refunded Click & Collect purchases.

The survey found that a third of those not collecting their order saw the process as too much of a hassle, opting to have their purchase refunded and ordering it online instead. Other gripes included resentment at having to pay to pick up their own goods, long waits, and a complicated identification process. Two in five respondents said they would visit shops more often if Click & Collect was improved.

Kirsty Morris, director at Barclaycard Payment Solutions, says: "Brands have the opportunity to not only increase the number of shoppers through their doors but also to reduce costs and returns, while generating revenue from 'Click & Collectors' purchasing additional items in-store.

"Enhancing the Click & Collect experience is a potentially lucrative way for retailers to ward off the unprecedented challenges of the high street and bridge the gap between online and in-store shopping."



### COLLECT+

The collect plus service has been running for a few years now, including at Capital & Regional's portfolio of eight community shopping centres. The service allows busy consumers to shop online and order their purchases to their local centre to be picked up at their nearest convenience, taking the burden away from individual retailers, cutting down wait times and providing a one-stop journey for those using the service.

In June 2018, Capital & Regional launched its 'Enhanced Guest Lounge' concept at the Mall Maidstone, which has since also been rolled out at Exchange Ilford, with changing areas incorporated into the centre's existing guest lounge. This has allowed shoppers to try on their Collect+ purchases, as well as pick them up and return them if necessary all in one convenient location. Collect+ users at the Maidstone Mall also have an hour of free allocated parking, making their short stay worthwhile. In addition to the Collect+ service, all of C&R's community shopping centres have easily-accessible Amazon lockers, and between the two services over 59,000 parcels were handled in 2018.





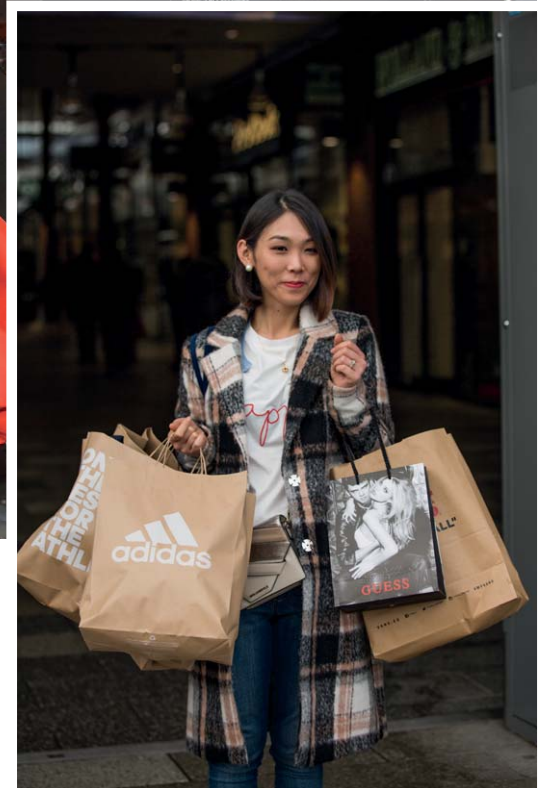
**DROPIT**

Earlier this year the app-based delivered-to-door shopping service Dropit was launched at Wembley Park's London Designer Outlet. The service is the reverse of Click & Collect in that shoppers make their purchases in the centre and rather than have to carry them around and transport them home, they simply drop off their purchases at the Dropit point and their packages are delivered to their homes, hotels or workplaces.

Purchases can be made at any of LDO's 50 stores, gathered together from multiple retailers, and delivered at a time and date of the shopper's choosing, including the option for same-day delivery. The service allows shoppers to make the most of their visit by shopping freely and unencumbered by a heft of shopping bags.

The Dropit service has numerous benefits catering to its diverse range of guests: tourists, for example, can shop and still enjoy a full day of sightseeing comfortably, knowing their shopping bags will be sent to their hotel, while event goers at the nearby Wembley Stadium and The SSE Arena, no longer need to worry about the security policy concerning bags if

"Two in five said they would visit shops more often if click-and-collect was improved"

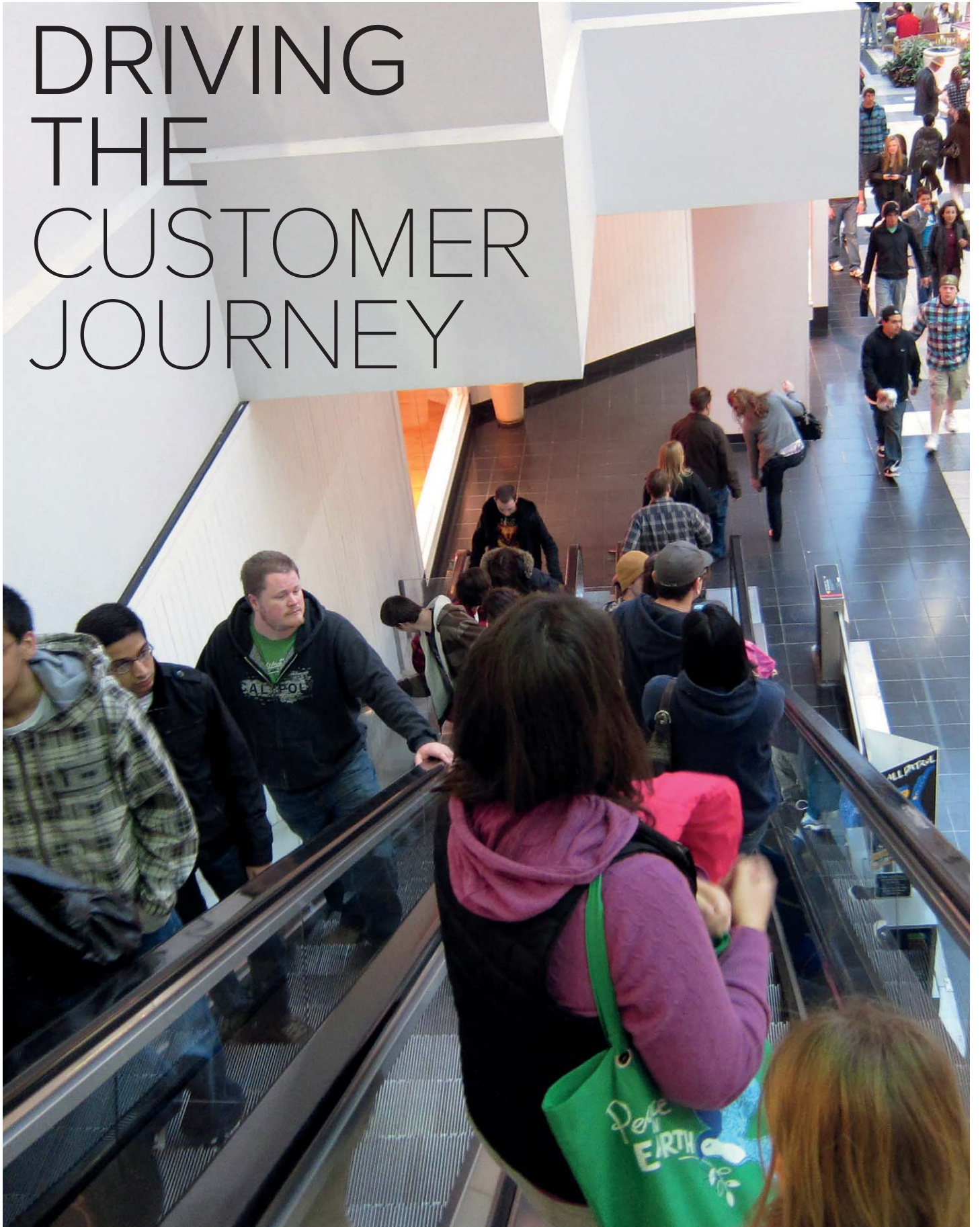


they go shopping before a big event. LDO has also seen guests using the delivery service to send their purchases as far afield as Edinburgh and Leeds.

LDO general manager Sue Shepherd says that the introduction of Dropit further demonstrates the emphasis being put on guest service at London Designer Outlet: "In allowing guests to have all their purchases delivered to their home or hotel in one fell swoop, we are bridging the gap between physical retail and online shopping and the uptake has been very encouraging. The average transactional value by our visitors using Dropit is almost five times higher than the average spend at LDO."



# DRIVING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY





## OnBrand talks customer service

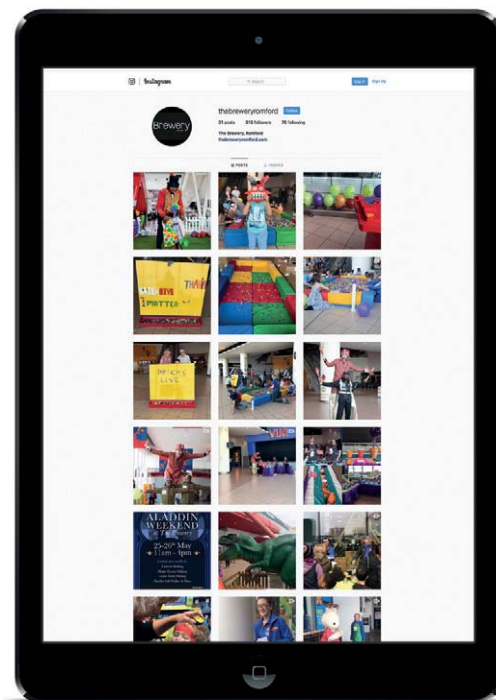
**H**appy customers mean full tills, a great reputation and motivated retailers and staff. It is the circle of shopping centre life. However, the satisfaction goes way further than some think: it is a full service, 24/7 requirement where all touchpoints must be joined up and work in harmony. So how can centres achieve this level of customer service and satisfaction?

“The five main things that people are looking for when they come to a shopping centre’s website are: opening hours, store info, offers, car park info and centre info,” says Michael Higgins, web developer at full-service marketing agency in the shopping centre arena, OnBrand. “As this is the most sought-after information to the user, it is important that this is easy to find from the home page of the website. To do this, we ensure that there is a very simple and easy to understand navigation menu.”

First impressions count, which means it is crucial that customers have all the information they need quickly to hand. As recent research from OnBrand establishes, this means building a fully responsive, mobile-compatible website which shows these five pieces of information about a centre in plain sight.

“We use the top bar above the header to contain the opening hours and contact details so that they are always visible to the user whatever page they happen to be on,” Higgins adds.

There will also be those who prefer to pick up the phone to get their information. The best course of action is an automated service to deal with the most common questions, offering five options and then providing some music for the caller while they wait. OnBrand advises that when pre-recording messages, the tone should be upbeat, friendly and the message should let your caller know about opening times and



shopmobility quickly. Hold time is also essentially an easy marketing spot and could be used to tell the caller about an upcoming event, keeping them occupied so they won't feel as though they are being kept waiting.

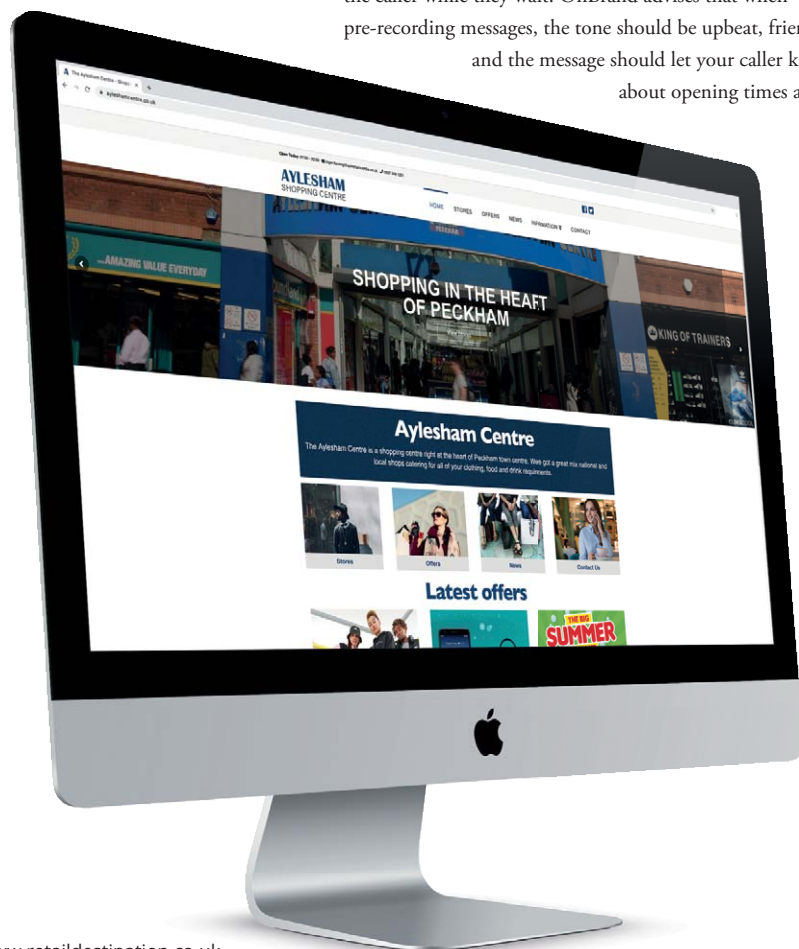
Once shoppers arrive at a centre, clearly signposted parking areas with transparent parking costs are a must, especially those new to a centre. Making sure that staff trained to offer relevant information in a friendly and concise way, and be willing to drop their daily task to go above and beyond are good marks of excellent customer service. Customer service is key but without it, the centre is equally as faceless as an online store.

Research by OnBrand has shown that customers respond so much better when there's music involved.

Piyush Patel, director of production at OnBrand, explains how music influences shopper behaviour: “The pace of the track can have a huge influence on how people move through your centre. On a quiet day, you might want to play something calm to slow shoppers down and increase dwell time, keeping your centre as full as possible. Likewise, when you get busy on a weekend, a nice quick beat can keep customers moving and improve the flow throughout.”

Add to that some in-centre messaging with relevant information, and this joined up approach ensures you hit one of the main touchpoints in a customer journey.

And the customer journey lasts far longer than after a visit, most notably through social media, which can be used both as a tool to build the centre's brand, but also as a social listening device to ensure any online or social complaints are met. Customers have grown to expect a fast response, which is why it is important to work to strict service level agreement. Through this, it means that customers are always satisfied, and mystery shopper targets are always met.





# PARK & RIDE



## Oxford increases its bus services

**P**ark & Ride is a service that has long existed in the UK, reducing congestion in roads leading to and within city centres, as well as raising revenue to improve road safety, and stimulating growth in the tourist sector. The service is designed to give people a better alternative to making the journey into city centres, reducing journey time and costs, minimising stresses posed by driving in a busy place and finding parking spaces, and offering a small boost of environmental consciousness.

In August, UK phone parking solution, RingGo, announced a new expansion of its portfolio with two Oxfordshire County Council Park & Ride car parks on the outskirts of Oxford taking up the service with a total of 2,093 spaces.

RingGo, which is known to over 70% of regular parkers in the UK, already works with Oxford City Council offering

cashless parking in its three Park & Ride car parks which also operate on the outskirts of the city. Usage at these sites amount to over half a million sessions per year. The city council was one of the earliest adopters of the payment service, using the cashless solution in the city centre car parks since 2008.

County Councillor Yvonne Constance, cabinet member for environment, says that the aim is to strengthen the Park & Ride offer to encourage people to visit Oxford, while reducing congestion and parking hassle, and allowing visitors to take their time enjoying the city.

“RingGo already provides quick, easy cashless parking on the city council Park & Ride car parks and with the new management arrangements with the city it makes sense to use the same service at Oxford Parkway and Thornhill too,” says Constance.





The parking payment system has worked with several other local authorities to provide Park & Ride solutions including Cambridgeshire, Portsmouth and Winchester. Each local authority is working in collaboration with RingGo to provide an approach that suits its Park & Ride needs, whether that be easier payments for parking, or more complex payment systems covering both parking and bus transfer.

Some councils are also implementing full-service solutions using vehicle-based automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), which proves particularly useful for large volume car parks, cutting down the time and effort of enforcement.

The RingGo service recently registered its 15 millionth UK customer. Drivers are able to use the app as an all-in-one parking service, where they can locate empty parking spaces, find the quickest route to these spaces, pay quickly and easily within the app and even top up their time wherever they are.

The service has also extended its offering to enable drivers to search for electric vehicle charging points across the UK and be directed to the chosen charging destination.

In addition, RingGo's emissions based parking application uses its technology to reward drivers of lesser-polluting vehicles with reduced charges when driving in and around cities. These services all contribute to creating greener and cleaner cities without the hassle of traditional parking payment machines.

"We have such a history of operating within Oxford, so it's great to expand our work to cover county's facilities too," says Peter O'Driscoll, UK country manager at RingGo. "We expect a dramatic increase in cashless uptake in these two new parking areas now that RingGo has taken over from the existing provider. Over 70% of regular parkers across the UK are familiar with RingGo, having used it somewhere around the country, so we expect them to use it here too."





# CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

## How car parks can go above and beyond expectations

**B**etween the climate crisis, mass political uncertainty, and near-universal financial inequality, much of the world is in an unending state of doubt, trying to prepare for whatever the next upheaval will be. It has often felt as though for such a worldwide issue that 'someone else will fix it', but we now exist in a time where all businesses are under scrutiny to go above and beyond the call of duty to become brands that consumers and stakeholders can trust as socially, economically, and environmentally conscious.

"We recognise that our corporate and social responsibility is crucial to our values and operations, and in expressing our commitment to our stakeholders," says Kenny Marland, managing director at parking management company HX Parking. "They include customers, employees, suppliers, clients, the community and the environment."

HX Parking has launched a new corporate social responsibility initiative which is broken down into three parts: the employees, the environment, and the community.

"We recognise that our social, economic and environmental responsibilities to these stakeholders are integral to our business, and we aim to demonstrate these responsibilities through our actions and within our corporate policies," Marland explains.

### EMPLOYEES

Employees are at the heart of all businesses and this should not be undervalued. They are instrumental in ensuring that the company succeeds. This means providing staff with a happy, healthy, and most importantly for some, well paid, working environment.

"We are ISO 9001 certified, with multiple policies and procedures in place," says Marland. "We are also a living wage employer. We have a European Christmas night out annually, we have never lost a member of staff by them "quitting" since the company was founded, and therefore I believe the working environment is good."

The compulsory national minimum wage increased this past

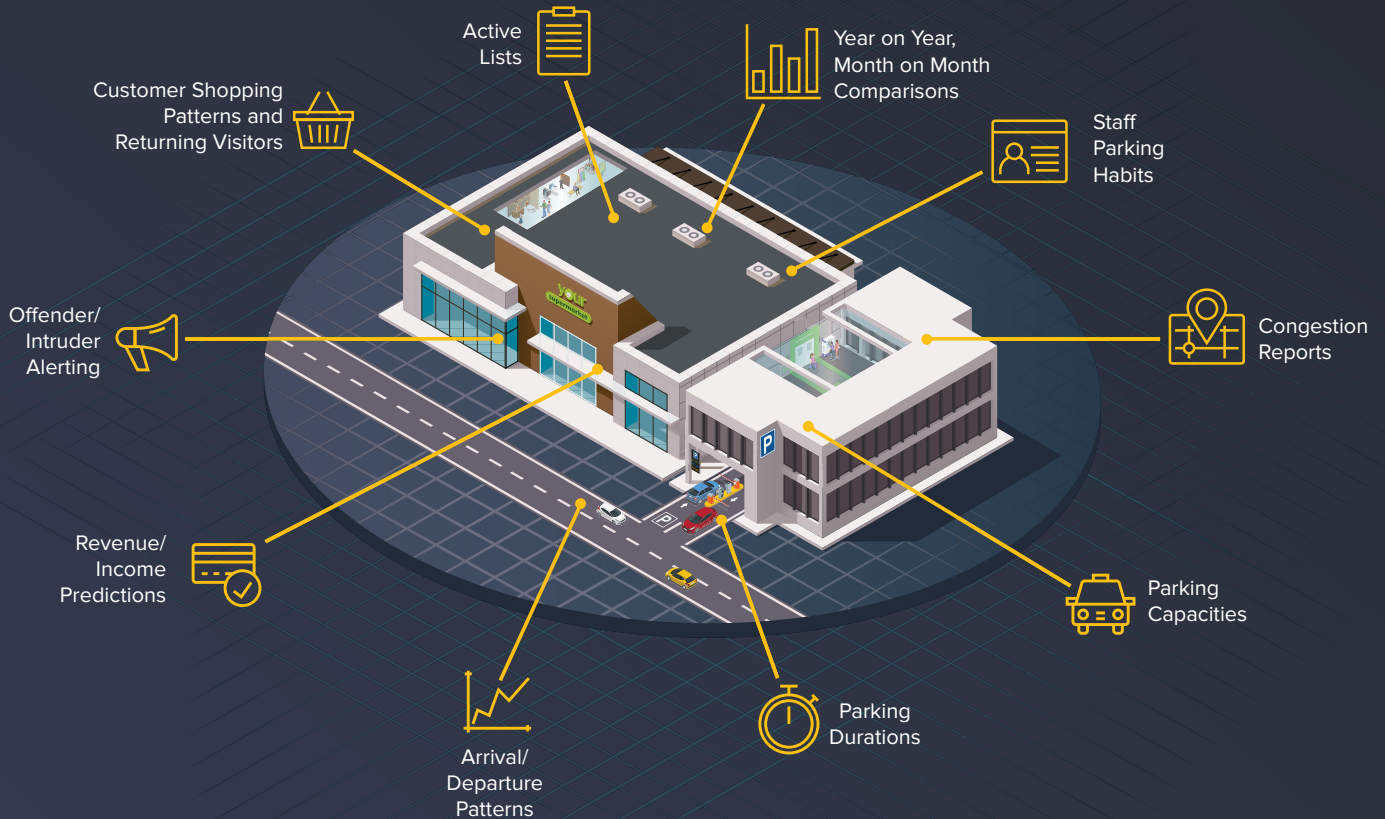




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April, but it is no longer acceptable to give staff what is literally the bare minimum. Large companies, such as those which manage car parks, have the capital means, and therefore responsibility, to go above and beyond the government-designated minimum.

“We value our employees,” says Marland, “and aim to promote best practice not only within our company, but to our clients and suppliers, that by providing a living wage as opposed to the government minimum wage, we can contribute to staff wellbeing and motivation.”

Marland says that the parking company is trying to empower its employees through their continued training and development, making sure individual contributions are formally recognised, and rewarding positive behaviour fairly. “Our ultimate aim,” he says, “is the happiness of our employees through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business.”

The HX Parking Management manifesto vows to provide safeguards to ensure that all employees of whatever nationality, colour, race or religious beliefs are treated with respect and without sexual, physical or mental harassment; to operate an equal opportunities policy for all present and potential future employees and will offer its employees clear and fair terms of employment and provide resources to enable their continual development; and to provide, and strive to maintain, a clean, healthy and safe working environment in line with its Health & Safety policy and safe systems of work.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

It is no secret that the world is burning. Just turn on the news and it is full of sweeping shots of the continued destruction of the Amazon rainforest, city-centre protests calling for action on climate change, and the omnipresence of teenage climate crisis activist Greta Thunberg in the media attest to this.

Making environmentally-conscious decisions is a responsibility held by every single human being and organisation on this planet, and perhaps especially for any organisation that exists to serve the car-driving public. “Protection of the environment in which we live and operate in is part of our values and principles,” says Marland. “We consider it to be sound business practice and encourage all our suppliers and clients to do the same.”

HX Parking always offers solar power with its ANPR installations as an alternative to electric. If solar power is agreed, then as a company, HX will donate £250 to Just One Ocean, a UK-based charity that is dedicated to raising awareness of ocean issues and protecting ocean ecosystems.

On a more local level, the company promotes a business-wide recycling policy, encouraging staff to use as much “green” and recyclable products as possible. “We discourage single-use plastic in our offices, and provide sustainable alternatives for staff, such as reusable water bottles as opposed to single-use plastic cups.” Marland says.

And for every new contract the company signs, it commits to planting one new tree via the National Forest Company. The National Forest Company, established in 1995, is responsible for leading the creation of the National Forest, working in partnership with landowners, businesses, public, private and voluntary organisations and local communities to deliver and champion the shared vision for the Forest.

“We also encourage our staff to car share or use public transport to minimise their carbon footprint, with the company paying a percentage of their transport costs as an incentive,” he adds.

## **COMMUNITY**

Whenever a business enters a new location, it should always take into consideration the local community. There is an inbuilt level of social responsibility that comes with inserting yourself within a pre-established community. Car parks are providing a specific service, but what else can they do to benefit the community? Perhaps getting involved with local charities and events, or sponsoring local sports teams.

“We pledge to sponsoring a grassroots football team in each county we hold a contract and work within, showing that we are fully committed to investing directly in the community,” tells Marland.

The parking provider also allows all of its full-time employees with a full day’s pay to go out into the community once per quarter allowing them to volunteer with a charity of their choice. “All our employees are also encouraged to take part in one sponsored event each year for a charity of their choice,” Marland tells. “The company providing incentives to raise as much money as possible.”

Aside from this time given to employees, HX Parking also sponsors a charity night in Leeds every year, the Kind Hearts Give Back ball in Leeds, a non-profit event to raise money and awareness for cancer. And they regularly undertake fundraising for their chosen charity of the year, via baking events, raffles, bring and buy sales, and dress down days.

The world does not change overnight, so it is easy to lose sight of the significance of small acts when it comes to making a difference. This makes it even more significant that companies whose footprint are much larger than the individual are making conscious, progressive decisions towards a better country and a better world.

It is one thing to simply show up and do the job that people expect. It is another to do so in a way that is socially and environmentally conscious. But it is further still to go above and beyond, going that extra mile to give back to the local community, the country, and the planet. This is, in short, the goal that all businesses should set for themselves, just as HX Parking Management has done, and we must hold them to this pledge.



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# STILL STANDING

## Cemplas celebrates 50 years in the parking industry

**E**xisting for half a century in any industry is become less and less common, which is what makes structural waterproofing and concrete repair specialist Cemplas' 50 years in the business a significant milestone. Iain Hoey spoke to Graeme Middleton, Cemplas' business development director, about how the company has maintained its status since its launch in 1969.

### **50 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY IS AN IMPRESSIVE FEAT – WHAT IS THE SECRET TO YOUR SUCCESS?**

Firstly: looking after our clients and not doing 'confrontational' contracting. Projects always throw up anomalies and it's how you deal with those when they do. If all you do is start shaking your head and get out the yellow variations book, customers know there's some extra costs coming down the line and possible contractual disputes. Our approach is to get the problem on the table at the earliest

opportunity and communicate fully and openly with the client in terms of the extent of the problem, what the cost and programme implications may be to sort it out and put a solution in place that's acceptable to all parties and move on.

Secondly: do a good job and they'll have you back. Though we have to compete to win work in tender situations, clients that have worked with us before know how we work, what our capabilities are and how we deliver our projects so it stands us in good stead when it comes to evaluation our suitability to deliver a contract for them.

### **HOW HAS THE PARKING INDUSTRY CHANGED AND GROWN OVER THE PAST FIVE DECADES AND HOW HAS CEMPLAS RESPONDED TO THOSE CHANGES?**

The realisation that these not-insignificant structures need regular inspection and TLC. With many having been constructed in the late 50s, 60s & 70s, many owners until



the late 1990s had turned a blind eye to the fact that their car parks were at risk by not putting in place protective measures. As such, many owners were landed with a significantly higher-than-desired repair bill because the scale of defects had just snowballed through years of little to no maintenance.

Now, of course, owners and operators have realised that a safe-feeling, well-lit and secure car park that is light and bright is an absolute magnet to customers – be they office workers by day and leisure users by night. Consequently car parks that have been transformed into contemporary looking and feeling structures have significantly benefitted from increased utilisation and patronage that provides a strong revenue stream to owners and operators.

**WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED AS A COMPANY SINCE IT ALL STARTED?**

Persuading clients not to cut corners unnecessarily to save a bit of money in the short term as it only comes back to bite them in the medium term. It's very much a chicken and egg situation when you're trying to persuade a car park owner that their car park needs a large chunk of money spending on it when there are other demands on their resources, particularly within the retail sector in recent years with the impact of the internet on shopping habits and footfall. There have also been plenty of challenges along the way when we've been working as

a sub-contractor and trying to get paid on time even when all payment terms had been agreed in advance.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHANGES, DEVELOPMENTS AND OBSTACLES IN THE PARKING INDUSTRY IN THE YEARS TO COME AND HOW WILL YOU FACE THEM?**

The biggest obstacles in the industry have been – and always will be – that there is always someone out there who say that they can do it for less. Consequently people end up getting what they paid for – which is a series of compromises – which usually leads to disputes and disappointment. The biggest changes are difficult to foresee but inevitably these will be led by consumer demand and trying to find a way that makes your car park stand out from the one across the road, whether it's better lit, easier to park or safer etc.

The key to responding to all of this is experience and agility. We try to innovate wherever possible and do this through listening to what the market is telling us the future of parking is going to look like. If you'd have told us back in 1969 that come our 50th birthday, car parks would be full of a mixture of cars that run on electricity and alternative fuels and that the next generation of cars would be ones that didn't need a driver, we probably wouldn't have believed you. In any event, whatever the next 50 years chucks at us, we'll respond to demand and deliver in the way we know best.

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# SAFE SPACES



## Deterring car park crime

Car parks are regularly featured as a setting in film and TV as a location of illicit activity, from dodgy dealings to stashing a getaway vehicle. While these are relative rarities in real life as car parking technology improves, CCTV and other deterrents can only go so far in preventing car theft and other car-related crime, and if a car park gets a reputation for being unsafe, drivers are going to go elsewhere rather than run the risk of being targeted. What can car parks do to improve standards and promote themselves as safe places to leave cars?

“Though car park security is a multi-faceted issue requiring a wide range of preventive measures, the primary threat is either theft of a motor vehicle or theft of personal items from a motor vehicle,” says John Gautrey, chief operation officer at CitiPark. “We place great importance on effective surveillance - both on-site or electronically via CCTV - to serve as a physical deterrent.”

He says that since it has been widely reported in the media that car thieves are becoming more technologically advanced and are learning how to clone vehicle keys, car parks are fostering the perfect environment for this new type of crime.

Car key cloning is a developing issue, as more new cars come with keyless systems, the thieves are already savvy enough to break through this electronically-hackable security feature. The theft can be carried through a series of transmitters and amplifiers that trick the car into thinking the key is nearby and allowing thieves to enter the vehicle and drive it away. Which makes entry and exit barriers a must.

“Entry and exit barriers are a simple yet effective deterrent for car thefts as drivers exiting the car park usually have to

surrender the ticket obtained on entering,” Gautrey continues. It is advisable to drivers, he says, that they should reduce the risk of theft by taking their parking ticket with them rather than leaving it in the car.

Other preventive measures include adequate lighting, perimeter fencing, on-site staff, a manned 24/7 control room, controlled pedestrian access and security gates.

“Typically,” he says, “if all the above measures are in place, the car park will be awarded the ‘Park Mark’ and this accreditation enables customers to find safe parking facilities. Over 85% of our car parks are Park Mark awarded, with a view to implementing throughout the whole portfolio in the coming months.”

And then there are the other, non-theft security issues that can take place within car parks such as defacement and trespassing.

“Understanding the factors that contribute to issues within the car park such as vandalism, rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour enables operators to react constructively, as these factors do not always stem from the site itself,” says Gautrey, advising that working in conjunction with the local authorities, charities and organisations, can allow car parks to take a collective approach when managing such issues as this enables them to better tackle the source of the problem.

“Local retail radio security schemes also work well to ensure staff welfare and helping to provide a deterrent to anti-social behaviour and vandalism,” he adds. “Prompt and decisive action against all issues of anti-social behaviour and vandalism not only deters criminals but also demonstrates to your customers that you are committed to providing the best possible parking environment and experience.”

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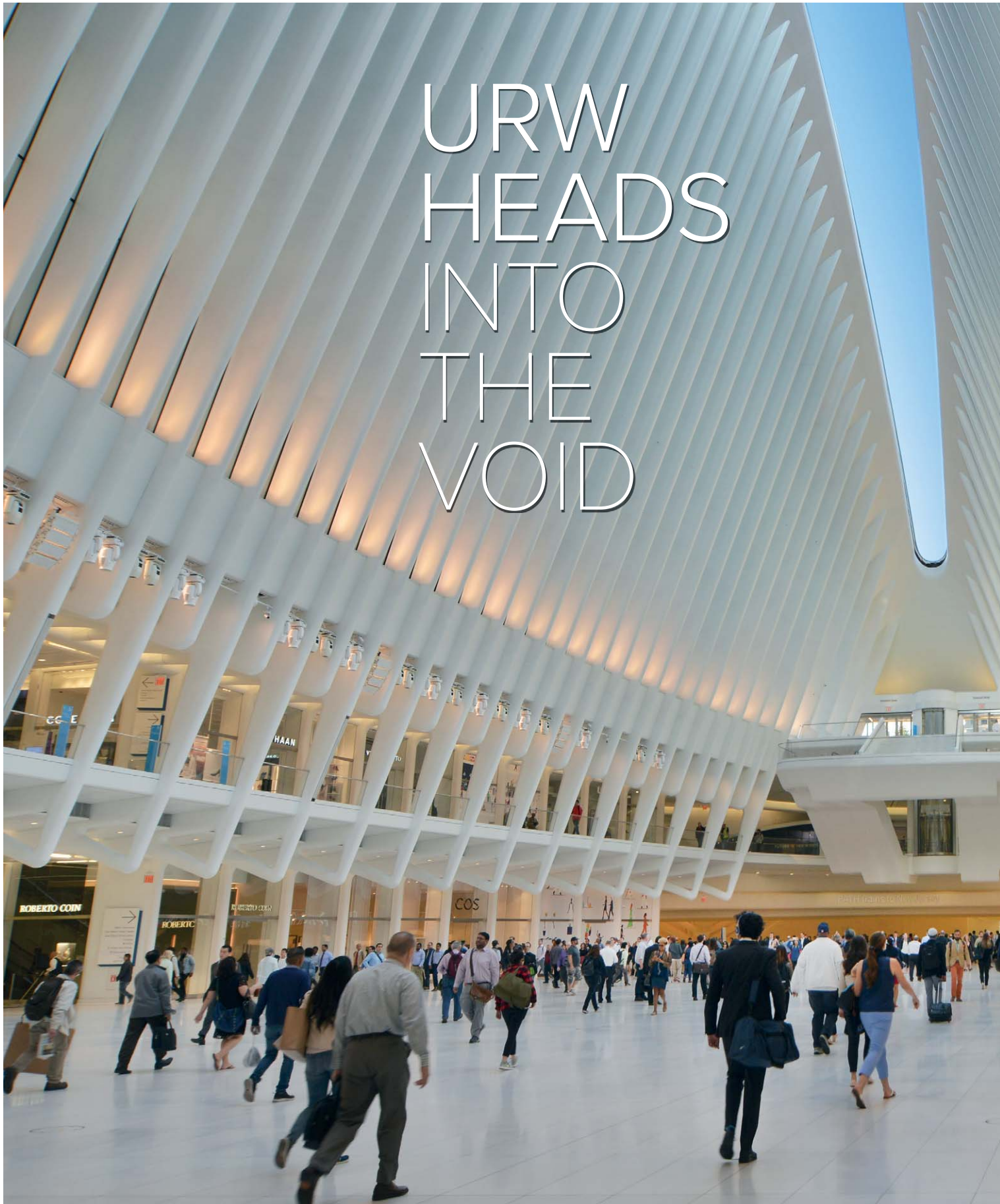
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# URW HEADS INTO THE VOID









**U**nibail-Rodamco-Westfield and The Void have formed a global partnership that brings cutting edge virtual reality entertainment to URW's portfolio in the United States and in Europe.

The partnership will bring more than 25 state-of-the-art virtual reality destinations to UnibailRodamco-Westfield flagship centres in the US and Europe, making The Void the world leader in immersive virtual reality experiences.

To kickstart the joint venture pop-ups at Westfield centres in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego have opened this summer and will later become permanent locations. New permanent venues will be rolled out in US and European cities including Paris, London and Stockholm and the full roll-out will be completed by 2022.

The Void is a US-based startup that has secured experiential content deals with top entertainment studios including Disney and Sony. It holds the rights to titles including Lucasfilm's Star

Wars: Secrets of the Empire; Walt Disney Animation's Ralph Breaks VR; Ghostbusters: Dimension, and an original format Nicodemus: Demon of Evanishment.

The company has secured financial backing from the Murdoch family and it has a strong pipeline of new experiences still to be released.

The partnership will allow The Void to scale its presence globally, taking advantage of URW's unique network of flagship destinations. And from URW's point of view the deal will allow it to offer its visitors cutting-edge, first-to-market entertainment across its locations, in line with its strategy of differentiating its properties through exceptional and memorable experiences.

The two companies will kick off their partnership this summer with four temporary pop-ups at Westfield World Trade Center in New York, Westfield San Francisco Centre, Westfield Santa Anita in the Los Angeles metro area and



**Main.** Westfield World Trade Center  
**Top.** Star Wars: Secrets of the Empire  
**Bottom.** Ralph Breaks Vr

Westfield UTC in San Diego. The will feature Star Wars: Secrets of the Empire and Ralph Breaks VR. All of these centres will open permanent The Void locations in the subsequent months.

Additional permanent locations – yet to be confirmed – are expected to include URW centres in cities such as Paris, London, Amsterdam, Chicago, Copenhagen, Oberhausen, San Jose, Stockholm and Vienna.

URW Group CEO Christophe Cuvillier said: “Over the past years, our industry has evolved dramatically. In a connected world, shopping is not enough anymore. Today, our customers expect to be entertained and brought together to share memorable, engaging sensory experiences. We are very happy to partner with The Void in an industry first, to bring cutting-edge immersive experiences like these to our visitors”.

“This perfectly illustrates our strategy of differentiation,

sourcing the number one concepts in retail and entertainment.

It also shows how our new transatlantic platform allows us to implement great concepts across our portfolio worldwide and how we can leverage our scale to create value. In return, we are helping The Void to scale its truly revolutionary experiences for consumers in the US and Europe and to pursue its path of growth.”

And Curtis Hickman, co-founder and chief creative officer of The Void, added: “As the leader in immersive entertainment, The Void recognises that consumers are looking for deeper and more meaningful experiences that will bring them closer together with family and friends. The Void transports consumers as far as their imaginations will go, providing them with an unforgettable entertainment experience that they will want to relive over and over again. Partnering with URW and utilising their footprint of premier destinations will allow us to deliver unprecedented social, out-of-home, and immersive entertainment experiences on a global scale.”



**Top.** Ghostbusters: Dimension

**Bottom.** Nicodemus:  
Demon of Evanishment



## RETAIL TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS DOWN

**The number of retail properties approved for conversion to residential property has dropped 17% in the last year, from 453 in 2017/18 to just 376 in 2018/19, according to research from law firm Boodle Hatfield.**

This drop in the number of retail to residential conversions comes at the same time as a sharp rise in vacant retail space. British Retail Consortium data showed that town centre retail vacancy rates hit 10% in April 2019, the highest since April 2015.

The fall in retail to residential conversions comes as the government continues to fall short of its target of 300,000 new homes per year built in England. Research from Savills recently found that even by 2021, only 260,000 new homes are likely to be built. Converting some tertiary retail into residential property has been proposed as a way of plugging this gap as well as solving the problem of long-term empty retail units.

However, many conversions carried out under the Permitted Development Rights system, which allows developers to convert space without planning permission, have been criticised as providing shoddily built, cramped units that fall well short of the standards expected for new housing. This has prompted local authorities to step in and demand higher standards by restricting PDR rights.

In cases where PDR restrictions are in place, developers must go through a full planning approval process, which increases costs and complexity significantly. Areas with restrictions on retail to residential conversions include:

- The London Borough of Hackney, which has put in place restrictions to prevent retail to residential conversions in its 'town centre' areas, including high streets in Dalston, Stoke Newington and Finsbury Park
- The London Borough of Waltham Forest, which has a retail to residential conversion restriction in place across the whole borough
- The London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has specifically restricted conversions of laundrettes to housing

# FLEXIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE

**Shopping centre owners must make their space more flexible to react quickly to store closures and slow declining rental income, says GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.**

Following Intu, Hammerson and Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield's disappointing results, which were primarily attributed to the high number of company voluntary arrangements (CVAs) and administrations in recent months, many key retail landlords have announced plans to diversify their shopping centre space as retail spend continues to shift online.

Sofie Willmott, retail analyst at GlobalData, said: "Diversifying shopping centre space is a wise long-term strategy to reduce exposure to the tough retail market and will help drive footfall to shopping centres. However, alongside major strategic investment, short-term solutions are essential to cope with the number of struggling retailers that are currently reducing their physical presence. Karen Millen and Coast are the latest to announce closures, following Arcadia's CVA approval in June with around 50 of its stores set to shut."

Shopping centre owners should restart conversations with online pureplays that may be interested in opening

temporary pop-up stores, showrooms or event spaces, with the potential for these to become permanent if successful. Online pureplay Gymshark runs pop-up events with influencers to promote its brand identity, while the boohoo group has recently confirmed that it is taking on a 5,300-sq ft store near Oxford Circus to use for events and as a showroom.

Willmott continued: "As native online brands continue to seek growth, temporary physical locations will help to build their brand awareness without the cost commitment involved in opening a permanent store.

"Much smaller units will be more affordable for local independent brands and could be viable as a second location for retailers that have larger stores in the shopping centre but want to display a specific range in its own space. This is a technique we have seen used in the Emaar-owned Dubai Mall."

Willmott concluded: "Unoccupied space could be used as learning studios seeing landlords partnering with local companies to provide tutoring for children, craft classes or technology lessons. This is similar to what John Lewis has started to offer as part of its focus on experience."



# INVESTMENT VOLUMES REMAIN SUBDUED

According to Knight Frank's latest bulletin on the shopping centre investment market, deal volumes remain well below the long-term average with just £418m transacted in Q2 this year. The bulk of this was in two transactions: Cale Street's acquisition of intu Derby at £186m and Ashby Capital's acquisition of Kensington Arcade at £120m. Without these larger deals, the average deal size was low at just £14m.

Other notable deals included Medway Borough Council's acquisition of Pentagon, Chatham at £35m in another sign that local authorities are prepared to step in and take action to cure the issues in their town centres.

Knight Frank also reported a greater willingness to put stock into the open market – a change from the “grey market” we have experienced for the past 6-12 months. Portfolios of legacy private equity stock and higher yielding assets have all reached the market in the last quarter, contributing to the £1.3bn of stock openly available.

Increasing lender pressure has driven most of these sales – 55% of sales by volume in the open market today involve either a private equity seller or the lender. The degree to which this increases is dependent on the attitude of the banking sector towards the retail exposure they have. UK institutions are behind 35% of sales as the reweighting of their portfolios continues.

Nicholsons, Maidenhead was one such example where the lender (Hermes) took control of the situation and forced a sale but elsewhere there are many portfolios where the exit is more difficult and so other measures, such as cash sweeps or appointing new asset managers to halt the capital and income decline in their assets, are implemented.

However, there is increasing confidence in the convenience and value sectors as more insulated retail investments. Shopping centres dominated by these occupiers tend to experience lower online penetration, lower exposure to CVA activity and more often than not a sustainable source of footfall. Grocery retailers for example produced just 7% of their total sales via online channels last year (source: Mintel/Knight Frank). Their many delivery channels are well documented (including click & collect and home deliveries) but it is clear that these occupiers will continue to need a significant physical store presence in the UK.

In many cases, these schemes never experienced the rapid rental growth seen elsewhere in the market and so rents remain affordable for retailers. With yields across the retail subsectors moving out to seemingly attractive levels, Knight Frank said we are beginning to see greater acceptance that the whole market has been tarred with the same brush and some investors are alive to the reality that there are diamonds in the rough and certain opportunities in the market are starting to present good value.



# POP-UPS IN DEMAND

**Pop-up shops are an adrenaline shot for retail, while brands like Comfort, Magnum and Louis Vuitton have recently opened one; but how do British consumers feel about them?**

This is a question retailer OnBuy.com sought to answer, with a pop-up shop survey presented to 1,424 British consumers.

The survey revealed the three main factors that would make consumers want to attend a pop-up shop: the prospect of “freebies” (65%), a unique experience (61%) and the chance to try new products not yet available (57%). Of less interest are product demonstrations (22%) and guest speakers (17%).

Comparably, the factors that would turn consumers away from attending a pop-up shop include overcrowding (73%), no products available to try (50%), visually unappealing qualities like abrasive music and colours (47%) and no staff on hand to answer queries – at 37%.

Cookery pop-ups are of most interest to the British public, with two-thirds of the vote (60%); followed by fashion (50%), cosmetic (47%), tech (40%) and art (37%).

When asked “When attending a pop-up, what do you expect from product pricing?” 47% of respondents revealed they expect to pick up a bargain or items at a discounted rate. While 40% expect a realistic insight into a brand's pricing and over a third (37%) expect to be able to take away freebies and samples at no cost.

Over two-thirds (63%) of consumers stand firm on the fact access (entry) to pop-up events should be free of charge. Although 30% did argue it would depend on how much they like the brand or product involved, just 7% would be willing to pay for a meaningful experience.

Moreover, 60% of Brits believe the biggest reason pop-up shops are becoming so popular is it's easier to discover independent/smaller brands. Other factors include it's fun and exciting (57%) and it's a more intimate and personal way to connect with consumers (43%).

Tellingly, when asked “Do you think the concept of a pop-up shop is a good way to revitalise retail?” an overwhelming 70% of Brits agreed yes – just 13% said no – which indicates the shape of things to come in the world of retail.



# FESTIVAL PLACE REACHES FOR THE STARS

**Customers at Festival Place shopping centre in Basingstoke were treated to a pair of free concerts by the Philharmonia Orchestra last month. The concerts, celebrating the Summer of Space, were held in the centre's atrium which had been decorated with huge models of the planets and the programme featured excerpts from Holst's Planet Suite.**

The concerts marked the culmination of a summer-long activation, which saw the centre hosting the Philharmonia's Virtual Orchestra installation, an immersive experience that allowed visitors to experience the work of a classical orchestra from the inside.

The shopping centre and leisure destination partnered with the world-famous Philharmonia Orchestra and The Anvil to host the installation on the upper level of Festival Place from July 6 to August 11.

The installation was housed in two vacant units on the centre's upper level. The first housed a virtual reality display that allowed the visitor to take up a seat in the first violins and watch the conductor and musicians at work.

The second 10-room digital installation offered visitors the chance to play along with the different sections of the orchestra as part of a guided tour of the orchestra led by music specialists.

Festival Place was the last destination for this unique project, which has toured Bedford, Leicester and Canterbury and attracted over 50,000 visits.

The experience was delivered by Festival Place, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and The Anvil arts venue in Basingstoke, where the orchestra has been Orchestra in Partnership since September 2000.

Festival Place centre director Neil Churchill said: "This was a fantastic opportunity to explore a symphony orchestra from the inside as it performs Holst's The Planets, making your way through the installation from violins to percussion, and from Mercury to Neptune.

"There were also school, community group, and family workshops with fun activities, allowing as many people as possible to enjoy this wonderful orchestral music." In all 10,000 people passed through the exhibit during the summer.

Churchill added: "The Virtual Orchestra ticked a lot of boxes for us: it's immersive and it's socially inclusive. For example a quiet hour took place at selected times for those who might have found the experience too loud or dark."

Jonathan Mayes, the Philharmonia's director of residencies and regional programme, said: "We were delighted to bring The Virtual Orchestra to Basingstoke



having spent the last 18 months developing the project with Basingstoke Together, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, local arts organisations, and our principal partners Festival Place and Anvil Arts.

"The audience development work at the heart of The Virtual Orchestra is central to our UK residencies programme and this programme saw thousands of people interacting with cultural activities in an entirely new way.

"For many people, this was the first time that they experienced orchestral music and we have already found that the digital platform for this exposure can be overwhelmingly powerful."

# C&R LAUNCHES WALTHAMSTOW APPEAL

Capital & Regional, the owner of The Mall Walthamstow, where a serious fire recently broke out impacting on a number of local businesses and their staff, is partnering with retailTRUST, the leading retail industry benevolent charity, to launch an appeal to support those employed at The Mall and who have been negatively affected by the incident.

retailTRUST has set up a Just Giving page and it and Capital & Regional have each pledged £25,000 on an initial basis, with a contribution from Waltham Forest Council of £10,000 bringing the starting amount to £60,000. The Fashion & Textile Children's Trust is also supporting the campaign and offering its services to The Mall community.

Capital & Regional CEO Lawrence Hutchings said: "The Mall

is at the heart of the community in Walthamstow and we understand that the fire has had an impact on some people working in our stores in addition to the many people who work and live locally.

"Our priority is to have the centre fully operational again as safely and promptly as possible. To this end, a number of stores have been able to open and others will do so in a phased manner, however it could take some time before those stores that were more seriously damaged can reopen.

"In the meantime, we are working very hard to provide help and support to those experiencing hardship as a result of the fire, including this partnership with the two foremost charities in our sector to offer additional financial and emotional assistance."

## SEPTEMBER MOVES



Central London retail and restaurant specialist HANOVER GREEN RETAIL has expanded its agency team with two new recruits. HANNAH WHITE joins from niche consultancy Shackleton and BEN SELWYN from CBRE. The pair will work on the firm's major landlord instructions of Carnaby Estate, King's Cross, Covent Garden, Old Spitalfields Market, Berkeley Square Estate alongside other London holdings.



Developer LCR has appointed LYNNE GLOVER as centre manager for Waterloo.London, the 135,000 sq ft progressive retail and leisure development it is creating in the heart of London's South Bank. Bringing over 30 years' experience in the retail industry, Lynne joins from Angel Central, where she acted as centre manager for nine years. She has previously worked for CBRE, Savills, Debenhams and Buro Four.



Planning and development consultancy MONTAGU EVANS has appointed partner JOSH MYERSON as its new head of rating. The 35 strong rating team works from offices in London, Glasgow and Manchester offering business rates consultancy to landlords, developers and occupiers. He joined Montagu Evans as a graduate in 2007 and became a partner in 2015, leading the firm's graduate programme soon after.



HAMMERSON has appointed SIMON TRAVIS to the role of group investment director and managing director Premium Outlets. He joined Hammerson in 1998, and has held a number of roles including investment manager and business development director. He joined the group executive committee as group investment director in 2018. At the same time Hammerson has appointed JAMES LENTON as chief financial officer and executive director. A chartered accountant, he joins from AIG, and prior to that EY.



QUEENSBERRY has appointed KEITH STONE as leasing director, working as a consultant specifically supporting leasing for Heart of the City II in Sheffield and The Glass Works in Barnsley. Previously, he worked for major retail property and development companies including Land Securities and Lendlease. His projects include Bluewater, Cabot Circus Bristol and Grand Central Birmingham.

## THE BRUNSWICK SPREADS POSITIVITY THROUGH POETRY

The Brunswick shopping centre in London's Bloomsbury has teamed up with poet James McInerney to provide its visitors with moments of positivity throughout the summer.

Customers are able to see several of his new poems every week, displayed on chalk boards within the centre. These thought-provoking pieces are created to inspire, amuse and promote a positive mindset within the community.

The Brunswick is working closely with London creatives to create an arts hub in the heart of Bloomsbury and the 'Positivity Through Poetry'

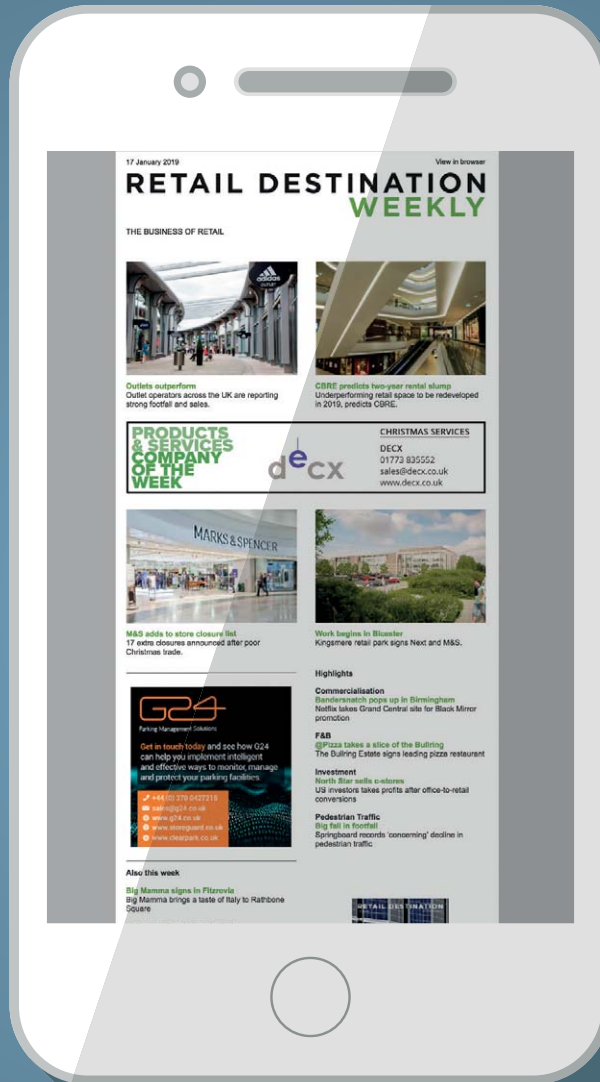
event follows the introduction of the 'Brunswick Unplugged', live music event on Saturday lunchtimes.

Centre manager David Plumb said: "With such a huge focus on mental health in the media at the moment as well as our acknowledgement of the stresses of everyday life, we wanted our visitors to be able to enjoy some small moments of joy throughout the summer. Our partnership with James is just one of many we are working on with creatives in the community, with the aim of creating a vibrant hub, here in the heart of Bloomsbury."





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