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David Cameron launches the UK's biggest ever business event

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Five years of ACC Liverpool

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Continuing the success of the Aintree Grand National

READY FOR ITS CLOSE UP
Why Liverpool cinema audiences are getting a sense of déjà vu
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it’s the Grand National
4th - 6th April 2013

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WHEN people come to Liverpool, we're confident that we can make them feel at home. Whether it's big sporting occasions, industry seminars or cultural jamborees, Liverpool delivers.

Our track record goes before us, from Capital of Culture in 2008 to last year's hugely successful Global Entrepreneurship Congress.

So it was no surprise to us when Prime Minister David Cameron chose Liverpool to host next summer's must-visit event for global trade and industry, The International Festival for Business (p8).

Over two months, Liverpool will be the business capital of the world, as thousands of delegates descend on our venues, decamp in our hotels and restaurants, and delight in the cultural calendar of events we'll be programming.

It's something that comes naturally to us. Liverpool City Region's annual hosting of 'the world's greatest horse race', The Grand National (p19), and Britain's most thrilling music and digital expo, Sound City (p26) are events which excite and engage the business community and add millions to the city's, and the region's, burgeoning economy.

And, with the runaway success of Liverpool's Arena and Convention Centre (p12), we've even the right environment to make businesses grow, too. No wonder the venue is winning global clients, from BBC Worldwide to Hyundai.

It's not just the warmth of our welcome - in Liverpool we have everything in place to make things happen.

Welcome to this issue of It's Liverpool
ACCELERATE
2013

passion | performance | power

ARE YOU GETTING INVOLVED...

IN THE FESTIVAL FOR BRITAIN’S HIGH-POTENTIAL, FAST-GROWTH BUSINESSES

27 JUNE 2013 | LIVERPOOL

JIMMY WALES,
FOUNDER OF WIKIPEDIA,
SPEAKING AT ACCELERATE 2013

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WHAT happens when art school graduates meet rock music, and when the psychedelic 60’s meets the power cuts of the 70s?

Tate Liverpool’s vibrant new exhibition, Glam! The Performance of Style continues the gallery’s surefooted reputation for curating shows which celebrate the best of 20th century art and culture. And it’s a thrilling evocation of the time, between 1971-75, when Top of The Pops was one long procession of eye-shadow clad lads, and feather-boas were artfully draped over sequinned lapels. Fusing album art, photography, video and installations, Glam! shows the staying power of lipstick, powder and paint.

For further information go to tate.org.uk

ALL eyes are on the city this June, as Britain’s first festival for high-growth business, Accelerate, takes the baton following last year’s hugely successful Global Entrepreneurship Congress. The GEC – which saw 3,000 delegates from around the world descend on the city to hear from speakers such as Sir Richard Branson and Martha Lane Fox – may be the inspiration for Accelerate, but this year’s festival is set to build on its legacy, with a programme of speeches, panel discussions and interactive Q&As from industry big hitters and inspiring leaders alike.

“Accelerate will mark the road to IFB 2014”, Liverpool Vision CEO, Max Steinberg said, “further consolidating Liverpool’s position as a globally renowned hub for business.”

For further information go to accelerate2013.co.uk

TENNIS legends and rising stars descend on the city this June, as the 12th Liverpool International Tennis Tournament takes place in Calderstones Park from the 20th to 23rd. The International has attracted many current and former number one players such as Novak Djokovic, Caroline Wozniacki, Victoria Azarenka in addition to legends like John McEnroe, Bjørn Borg, Martina Navratilova and Martina Hingis making it the biggest exhibition tournament in Europe. For Director, Anders Borg, it’s the culmination of many years of hard work, with Liverpool City Council, to deliver a world-class event. “It has become one of the highlights of the city’s sporting calendar and is the perfect build up for Wimbledon,” he says.

For further information go to liverpooltennis.co.uk
FOLLOWING a £50m refurbishment, seeing a brand new building rise behind its Grade II* facade, Liverpool’s Central Library will open again this spring. Liverpool gave the world the lending library over 150 years ago, so it’s no surprise we’re leading the way again, with the Central Library’s stunning new design finding space for state-of-the-art interactive hubs, digital downloads, gaming zones and a vibrant children’s Discovery centre. But it’s really all about the books – and with the city’s complete archives - the largest outside of London - housed in a temperature controlled new home, the city’s real treasures, among the oldest printed books in the world, will be protected for centuries to come. Who said the book is dead? Not Liverpool.

For further information go to liverpool.gov.uk

THE “Battle of the Atlantic” said Churchill, was ‘the dominant factor all through the war.” For the longest continuous military campaign of WWII, Liverpool was the crucible of operations: its subterranean war rooms the theatre from which the strategies were successfully played out.

In May 2013 the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic (BOA 70) will be commemorated with a series of events in the cities of Liverpool, London and Londonderry. Royal Navy and international ship visits are planned in support of the city’s core commemoration day, Sunday 26 May, with a march through the city by current Naval and Merchant Naval personnel as well as veterans, and a flypast of Fairey Swordfish.

For further information go to itsliverpool.com/culture

AT the recent BAFTA’s Best Film director Ben Affleck dedicated his award to those of us trying to get their ‘second act’. Well, we think Liverpool’s resplendent Albert Dock could easily have written his script. And, 25 years after its second act, the dock is still looking great.

On its birthday weekend, a full quarter century after the dock’s rebirth as the North West’s best-attended free tourist attraction, the dock will see a host of free family activities.

The Beatles Story will have free family workshops and Tate Liverpool, Merseyside Maritime Museum, and the dock’s bars and restaurants will be joining in the fun.

For further information go to albertdock.com
LET’S DO BUSINESS

The International Festival for Business is set to shake up the UK’s export economy next summer, when the world’s brightest business minds head to our city for the biggest business summit the UK has ever seen...

WE know Liverpool’s a great place to do business. And, when next year’s International Festival for Business opens in Liverpool, the world will know too.

For two months next summer, the IFB will see companies from start up to blue chip, local to global, descend on our city to meet, network, share ideas and forge valuable new relationships.

And we can’t think of a better backdrop than Liverpool for this game-changing event to take place in.

The event is the UK’s first ever international business festival, borne out of a desire to showcase to the world just how business friendly the UK is, and how Liverpool and the north west of England is well placed to help businesses promote strong, sustainable and balanced growth, with new partners around the world.

“‘The idea came from a review chaired by Sir Terry Leahy and Lord Heseltine,” says Liverpool Vision’s Festival Director Ian McCarthy. “As part of the Government’s drive to rebalance the economy of the UK, and to help drive prosperity to all parts of the country, there was a strong desire to hold a festival in the north.”

And, as an honorary ‘adopted Liverpudlian’, it wasn’t too much of a leap for Lord Heseltine and our own son of the city, Sir Terry, to settle on the shores of the Mersey.

We are, after all, a city founded on international trade, maritime and related services. But, over the past decade or so, we’ve shown that our mercantile heart isn’t just an open air museum - but the centre of an invigorated new business-friendly enterprise zone.

THE UK IS IN A GLOBAL RACE TODAY WITH A FIGHT TO WIN CONTRACTS AROUND THE WORLD AND THIS GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT THE UK THRIVES IN THIS RACE

David Cameron, Prime Minister
3 January 2013

THIS FESTIVAL PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE OUR VISION THAT THE MERSEY ONCE AGAIN BECOMES A KEY GLOBAL TRADING CENTRE

Ian McCarthy, Festival Director

“The transformation of the city over the last decade, and the scale of improvement in the business environment has fueled our confidence to put the city on the international stage again,” McCarthy says.
“This festival provides the opportunity to promote our vision that the Mersey once again becomes a key global trading centre. It will showcase the Enterprise Zones in the city region and inspire businesses in the north to connect to global growth markets and get exporting.”

And, more than this, McCarthy believes, it’s the city’s ability to make visitors feel welcomed, that gives Liverpool the edge.

“We have a tremendous track record of delivery, we’re a great host city. Liverpool’s reinvented itself as a great place to live and to work in. We’re not just a single offer destination, we’re the whole package.”

McCarthy points to Liverpool’s target-busting tenure as European Capital of Culture, our warmly received presence at the Shanghai World Expo, the hugely successful Global Entrepreneurship Congress, and the way millions of us came out to welcome 50 foot giants to our city’s streets last summer.

“We’re recognised as a safe pair of hands,” he says, “and we know how to cope with big ticket events.”

And, as events come, they don’t get any bigger than next year’s festival.

LIVERPOOL’S REINVENTED ITSELF AS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND TO WORK IN. WE’RE NOT JUST A SINGLE OFFER DESTINATION, WE’RE THE WHOLE PACKAGE

Ian McCarthy, Festival Director

A global gathering of the world’s most inspiring businesses, the festival will be a cauldron where industries converge to trade ideas, products and contacts. But the city, too, will be playing its part, with a parallel calendar of cultural events to really showcase the special DNA that’s bubbling up on the shores of the river.

“It’s been called the Olympics for Business for a very good reason,” McCarthy says, “because there will be hundreds of top class events from June to July 2014, attracting thousands of visitors from across the globe, and bringing with it an estimated £100m worth of investment for the UK. Although our hunch is that the figure will be much more.”

The buzz in Liverpool is now being felt in London. At a preview in the QEI1 conference centre in the heart of Westminster, more than 400 of the capital’s business leaders, MPs and movers and shakers heard from a range of high-profile speakers including Trade Minister, Lord Green and Sir Terry Leahy and Charles Morgan alongside Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson. “The positive reaction to what we are trying to do was tangible. It was a unique networking event and we were at the centre of it”, says McCarthy.

At the London event, Dr Gunveena Chadha, Director of the UK office of the Confederation
of Indian Industry (CII) also outlined the significance of the signing of an historic Memorandum of Understanding between India and Liverpool that will see a regular stream of business delegations to the UK from the sub continent.

It’s McCarthy’s signature on that document after brokering the alliance in India in January: “The CII is the key business group in India, so the MOU is very significant. The Festival is about opening doors to global opportunities to everyone and India’s involvement will be a huge draw.”

And everybody is welcome. The festival will bring together cities from north to south, east to west in 61 days of events, exhibitions and celebrations and is set to surpass expectations, according to McCarthy: “In Clarion Events, we’ve enlisted the help of the largest independent event organiser in the UK, a team with a track record of bringing businesses together worldwide.

“And Liverpool’s Arena and Convention Centre is already setting the standard for staging world-class events.”

The city, says McCarthy, is the perfect stage for this seminal event. A step-change in our fortunes, reflecting the great strides made in recent years.

“The world works best when it works together,” he says. “You can’t have a successful business in isolation. It’s about meeting others, exchanging ideas, and learning from your peers.”

And the place to do just that?
It’s Britain. It’s Liverpool. 

For further information go to ifb2014.com
How do you go from nought to three million in just five years? Simple: just build and manage the most successful new convention centre and arena in the UK, and watch the world beat a path to our door...
SOME developments settle themselves so snuggly into the city that you’d be hard pressed to recall a time when they weren’t amongst us.

Liverpool without a conference centre and arena? Seems impossible, doesn’t it? Yet, not so very long ago, the scything profile of Wilkinson-Eyre’s RIBA-winning riverside ACC Liverpool existed nowhere but on blueprints and CAD screens. If Rihanna had been passing, she’d have needed more than an umbrella to perform on this windswept expanse of torn and rutted tarmac and puddles.

Now, the development is front and centre in the minds of promoters, convention organisers and big companies - and Liverpool, finally, is on the lucrative conference circuit.

What’s that saying about the best things coming to those that wait?

From Chief Executive Bob Prattey’s office, on the opposite side of the Kings’ Dock plaza, the distinctive butterfly-winged silhouette of the Echo Arena and BT Convention Centre arcs across the skyline like some descended futuristic spacecraft, glowing against the darkening Mersey.

“We were tired of travelling to Manchester to see our favourite bands. We’re a musical city. It was only natural that, given the chance, we’d show the world how to run an arena.” Prattey says.

The venue might well be where the action is, but for the thousands who visit every event, it’s just the starting point for excursions into the city beyond. And a journey that often leads to another, and another...

“How move around,” Prattey says. “Conference organisers like to vary their locations. So for us to get repeat bookings from events that, previously, have never used the same venue twice is an incredible vote of confidence.”

As too are the tales from those attending, returning home to tell their colleagues just how removed from the tired stereotypes 21st century Liverpool really is.

“The most effective way to sell our city is to give everyone who comes here an experience over and above their expectations,” Prattey says. “We’re all about building long term relationships.”

“Liverpool Vision led the way on this,” he says. “It was their determination, with NWDA, that saw the venue open in time for the Capital of Culture celebrations.”

From then on, the Arena’s swiftly catapulted up the league of A-list event spaces, hosting the MTV Europe Music Awards, the MOBO Awards twice, the BBC Sports Personality of the Year and X-Factor Boot Camp, which alone reached more than 16m TV viewers.

Artists who’ve performed at the arena include Sir Paul McCartney, Beyonce and Elbow, and every year it’s regularly attacked by the Martians in War of the Worlds, whilst sporting events include the World Netball Series and the Davis Cup.

Alongside this, the smart BT Convention Centre has hosted a series of high profile conferences including the Labour Party annual conference, the Royal College of Nursing Congress and the Liberal Democrats spring and annual conferences. The party is set to return next year, for their conference.

“Every company in the land has a conference, and to get on the circuit, and get repeat bookings so soon is no mean feat,” Prattey says. “Many of the big ticket events are being booked up to 2025 now, so it’s a real testament to our team, and to the venue’s strengths, that we’re already creating an impact.”
With bookings from Hyundai, Swinton, ASDA and BBC Worldwide, the venue’s already snagged some of the conference circuit’s prize catches. But, despite the Convention Centre’s undoubted appeal, and the smooth running of the entire organisation, Prattee’s in no doubt, one of the biggest draws remains the city itself.

“Many are coming to Liverpool for the first time. And our retention rates are so high because people just fall in love with the place. You can feel the buzz in the air. The images from the Labour conference - with Liverpool bathed in sunlight, and happy conference-goers milling about the spruced-up waterfront - said more about where we’re going, as a city, than any advertising campaign ever could.

Talking of politics, you couldn’t get a safer venue for security-conscious events. The site is surrounded, on all four sides, by water! Liverpool can host an event without a single street cordon. You can’t say that about any other UK city - and relatively few global ones.

But Prattee and his team aren’t stopping here. The city’s ambitious plans for a new exhibition centre are taking shape in the space to the south of ACC Liverpool.

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THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO SELL OUR CITY IS TO GIVE EVERYONE WHO COMES HERE AN EXPERIENCE OVER AND ABOVE THEIR EXPECTATIONS

Bob Prattee, Chief Executive

It will, when it’s complete in just over two years’ time, be the final piece in the waterfront jigsaw: and will cement this corner of the city’s importance as a global events hub.

“We’ll have a linked walkway from the Convention Centre to the Exhibition Centre,” Prattee says, “The Exhibition Centre could be used separately as an exhibition and conference venue, or as additional space for fringe events from the main conference.”

The facility will cost in the region of £40m, and in its first year is expected to host about 50 events and attract some 250,000 visitors.

In turn, this will support around 1,300 jobs in the wider economy and contribute an estimated £40m per year to the city region. Surrounding it, a clutch of new cafes, bars and an upscale hotel will create an animated new quarter to an energised and exciting new riverside quarter.

“Our waterfront is the natural theatre for the city,” Prattee says, “Once you get people to Liverpool, the product is here. The city can’t fail to impress.”

For further information go to accliverpool.com
ACC Liverpool is an award-winning venue located on the world-famous Liverpool waterfront. Perfectly situated for access from across the UK and only 2 hours from central London, ACC Liverpool is the perfect choice for your next event.
WE like to boast about our best bits in Liverpool. Is there a city that doesn’t? So it’s especially pleasing when our civic pride is validated by those who are, perhaps, a little less partisan than us.

Hope Street’s long been a favourite thoroughfare at the top of the town - slicing cleanly through the city’s handsome 18th century Georgian Quarter, en route from Cathedral A to Cathedral B (Catholic to Anglican. Or the other way around, depending on your orientation).

But, last year, this trim stretch of cobbles, cafes and cultural houses received the ultimate accolade, scooping Best Street in the Great Streets Award.

Recognising excellence in civic planning, community engagement and pedestrian-friendly public realm improvements, the awards singled out Hope Street’s ‘strong physical character’ ‘high quality architecture’ and ‘excellent mix of cultural venues’.

The street beat off competition from London’s Exhibition Road (home to South Kensington’s swanky shops and world-class museums) and Penzance’s bustling Chapel Street.

The awards are run by The Academy of Urbanism, whose members include industry-leading architects, planners, engineers, developers and designers. People, in other words, who know a good stretch of street when they see one.

“Hope Street excels as both a destination and in the way it integrates urban life in the...
local area," says Stephen Gallagher, from the Academy of Urbanism.

“The street show’s just how successful a project can be when it’s steered by clear leadership, and a relationship between businesses, the City Council, and Liverpool Vision,” he adds.

“These parties have delivered innovative public realm design, serving as a fantastic learning opportunity for us and other streets the world over.”

“Hope Street is truly a worthy winner of this award. It has transformed itself from a street dominated by vehicles, to the backbone of Liverpool’s cultural offer. The street, backed by the businesses, residents and community organisations, has shifted perceptions of the whole neighbourhood.”

HOPE STREET EXCELS AS BOTH A DESTINATION AND IN THE WAY IT INTEGRATES URBAN LIFE IN THE LOCAL AREA

Stephen Gallagher

But it’s not all clever touches - such as the dramatic new piazza steps ascending to the Metropolitan Cathedral, or the al fresco performance space, and traffic-calming paving leading to the Philharmonic Hall that most impressed the judges.

It’s the area’s vocal, and passionate stakeholders (the Hope Street Community Interest Company meets every month) working together to create a unified, thrilling, urban ecosystem, where real ale suppers and students, culture mavens and Christian worshippers can meet, mingle and share their city.

“Visitors to the city are seeing Hope Street as an essential part of their visit, and now that it’s far more pedestrian friendly it’s proving itself a real asset in Liverpool’s cultural offer and economy,” says Michael Eakin, Chief Executive of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

“It’s a cultural hub, home to some of the most
significant performing arts organisations in the City Region, and it’s blessed with some stunning architecture.”

“Hope Street CIC continues to work in partnership with Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Vision, Liverpool LEP and others to promote and secure on-going investment for the street that retains its unique qualities and benefits the residents and businesses located here.

There’s been a Philharmonic Hall on Hope Street since 1849. Next year is the current hall’s 75th anniversary, the year after, the orchestra’s 175th birthday - so the street’s current rude health is well timed for some serious celebrations ahead.

“We’re currently planning celebrations around these two milestones and planning a £12m refurbishment of the Hall,” Eakin says.

“With Liverpool Vision recognising Hope Street as one of the City’s three ‘Great Streets’ we’re looking forward to even further investment. I doubt that any street in the world can match our offer.”

It’s a future that Liverpool’s iconic Anglican Cathedral is looking forward to just as keenly, as its Director of Enterprise, Eryl Parry attests:

“Nothing stands still up here,” Parry says, beneath the Cathedral’s soaring Gothic arches.

“There’s a commitment to sustainability which means investing in the future – whether it’s expansion of the restaurant and hotel business or the rebuilding of a theatre.

“It’s great that we won the award, but we can’t stop now. The city’s Strategic Investment Framework names Hope Street as one of its transformational projects, but also recognises the need for investment and creativity in the infrastructure required to make the area really thrive and reach its potential as a key ingredient in making Liverpool a ‘world-class city’.”

To that end, Hope Street will see the new £28m Everyman Theatre open this autumn, and a series of fairs and festivals animating the cobbles. Even the Cathedral itself is opening its mighty oak doors ever-wider: welcoming club nights, abseils and gigs for the likes of Dexy’s Midnight Runners. Anything’s possible at the top of the town, it seems.

“Yes, Hope Street is home to so much,” Parry says, “but in Liverpool there is so much more to us than just our fine Cathedrals and culture houses. We’re on a street called Hope and it is the work that we do together that is ultimately the most compelling reason why people will choose to invest, live, work and visit here.”

Walk along Hope Street and you’re traversing an old escarpment that rises high above the Mersey - and the rooftops of the city below. On a good day, you can see the mountains of Wales shimmering in the distance.

Yes, the view from Hope Street has never looked better. 🏗️

I DOUBT THAT ANY STREET IN THE WORLD CAN MATCH OUR OFFER
Michael Eakin

Used by permission of Liverpool Cathedral and Dennis Hardley Photography
The 166th running of the Aintree Grand National will see thousands flock to the city region to wager, race, parade and soak in the rich pageant that is the world’s greatest steeplechase. And with new director John Baker in the saddle it’s set to become greater.

Jonathan Caswell reports
EVEN people who don’t know one end of a horse from another have more than a passing interest in the Grand National, the most famous horse race in the world.

Every April, both fans and non-fans of the turf focus on Aintree in Liverpool to see if their small wager will win them enough for a ‘free’ night out in the bustling city centre, perhaps even more.

The National, of course, is the great leveller. One can study form, provenance of the horse, experience of the jockey, the trainer, the stable’s record, the conditions, but over four and a half miles and 30 fences almost any at the gallop can win.

And that’s its appeal, no expertise necessary.

On April 6th this year, one winner is guaranteed however – Liverpool. For the city, this most compelling of races, is not only the highlight of the sporting and social calendar, it brings a big boost to the coffers and exposure on a global scale.

It is already watched by more than 600m people in 140 countries, and brings Liverpool to a standstill while the race is run, but as the new NW Regional Director for the Jockey Club, John Baker says: “We can make more of Aintree’s global appeal. Last year’s race was watched by more people than the FA Cup final, so it’s a huge job to make sure it remains standing tall on a global stage.

These days £500m is spent on bets on the National in the UK alone and while that stat might not have a huge impact on the local economy, it does reflect the place this race has in the nation’s heart.

It is expected that the average spend per person in Liverpool for this year’s Grand National Festival will be in excess of £60 and at Aintree Racecourse itself three times that figure.

A modest return you might suggest but one shouldn’t underestimate the pulling power of this great sporting event. The annual total spend, including bets, at Aintree Racecourse is more than £27m and combined with the annual total spend in the wider Liverpool area of more than £9m, the return is around £36.5m.

Last year Grand National day was a sell out with the whole three-day festival attracting more than 150,000 paying punters.

It seems that while “The horse is god’s gift to man”, as an Arabian proverb goes, this horse race is a gift to Liverpool, one that any city would covet and John Baker wants to turn it into a gift that keeps on giving.

While the main day is naturally the focus of attention, the Grand National Festival is a three day affair, including Grand Opening Day on Thursday and Ladies Day on Friday: “We want to sell out for the whole meeting. On the other days we have made great strides in recent years and on the Thursday we now have a crowd of about 30,000, but we do have 20,000 spare capacity to build on.”

This year, top girl group The Saturdays and electronic string quartet Escala will get the Festival off to a flying start and the world-famous Red Devils parachute display team will be showing off their daring feats. On Saturday Welsh superstar Katherine Jenkins will sing the National Anthem. But Baker has still more to announce.
“This year we are going to try out a few different things on the opening day that we hope will make a real difference and the ideal scenario would be to sell out on all three days and move towards a total audience of 200,000.

“An extra 20,000 people does mean more money for us in ticket and hospitality sales, but we wonder if we have done enough in the past to be part of Liverpool and one aim is very much to meld Aintree with the City of Liverpool and to encourage the city to embrace Aintree more.

“I’m sure they do but I feel there is still work to be done on this - not just on the days of the Grand National meeting, but all year round.”

Key to this for Baker is tapping into the wider appeal of Liverpool as a visitor experience. In the last decade or so the city has undergone a £6bn transformation that has lifted it into the top five UK destinations for tourists.

They are attracted to the world famous waterfront, the architectural heritage, the huge range of cultural attractions, events and shopping and the vibrant night life, which in turn allows Liverpool people, the city’s greatest asset, to reinforce the status of the country’s friendliest city.

Baker adds: “We sell racing, but we can sell the whole Liverpool experience, so attending the National is not just about coming to Aintree to see some horseracing, it’s about what else goes on in the city.

“We want people to stay for the duration and experience everything that this region has to offer, rather than just coming racing and going again. We are aware that Friday is very much a local audience, but I do think we can do more to bring in people from outside the city. It’s a longer term goal but work starts now.”

That work includes attracting more to Aintree’s other five race days each year: “We have a big build up to the National which makes the other meetings seem somewhat of an afterthought. There are real opportunities to build up the attendances on the Fridays in May and June in particular and again we will be trying new things very soon.”

But for now his attention is this year’s great festival of steeplechasing. Apart from the main event, racegoers will also be able to watch the prestigious John Smith’s Aintree Hurdle, which has been switched from its traditional Saturday slot to Thursday. Friday’s feature races include The John Smith’s Melling Chase and The Topham Chase over the Grand National course in addition to the John Smith’s Handicap Hurdle.

And before the Grand National itself, The John Smith’s Maghull Novices’ Chase and the John Smith’s Liverpool Hurdle provide the perfect build-up to the John Smith’s Grand National itself at 4.15pm.

John Baker backed the winner 30 years’ ago and his tip this year: “Teaforthree”. Place your bets also on his and Aintree’s story running and running.

For more information about the Grand National go to aintree.co.uk
It’s not unusual for people in this city to experience a strange feeling of déjà-vu when we visit the cinema. The reason? When it comes to film locations, Liverpool’s very much up there with the ‘A’ listers thanks to the hard work of the Liverpool Film Office.

CAST your mind back to the 1980s and Liverpool was a city with a silted-up Albert Dock and warehouses yet to be transformed into swanky apartments.

But, away from the gloom of the recession, the bright lights of film crews were a regular fixture, offering a curious counterpoint to the sombre backdrop: the city was increasingly being used as a location for successful film and television projects: from Brookside to Boys From The Blackstuff, Letter to Brezhnev to Bread.

And the global film industry was watching. As were some bright sparks down Dale Street way.

“The spotlight was very much on Liverpool – both its locations and talent – and the industry wanted to find out more,” says Film Office Manager, Lynn Saunders.

“The recession was hitting hard and the council’s budget was so tight we needed to be dynamic and creative to find solutions to attract inward investment with minimal capital investment.”

Soon, a deal was struck between Phil Redmond’s hugely successful Mersey TV company and the City Council, and the Liverpool Film Office was born.

Finally, a use for all our stunning docks, our Victorian facades and our labyrinthine network of avenues and alleyways. “It really was an overnight success,” Saunders says of the office, the first of its kind in the UK and Europe, taking its inspiration and advice from the New York Film Office.

“The phone rang immediately and hasn’t stopped since.”

Over the past decade, the Film Office has attracted an estimated £100m of inward investment into the local economy. It’s attracted large scale Hollywood feature films to shoot in Liverpool including Guy Ritchie’s ‘Sherlock Holmes’, Warner Brothers ‘Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 1’, the John Lennon biopic ‘Nowhere Boy’ and Marvel’s blockbuster ‘Captain America: The First Avenger’. And the crews keep on coming.

Richard Hill, Location Manager for the Jack Ryan film due out this summer says: “Liverpool is an incredible city to film in.”

“The locations are stunning. We found nearly 100 of them, all of which look amazing. The architecture within the city, the dock areas and the surrounding countryside has combined to give us an incredible backdrop for our series. No other city in the UK could have provided us with such a palette to work with. Liverpool is served well by its Film Office, and we’ll definitely be coming back.”

With friends like these, it’s not hard to realise quite why our Film Office regularly trumps cities twice our size.

“We’ve a strong track record in attracting film and production, and driving the growth of a sustainable film and TV sector in the city. It generates economic impact of between £10m and £15m per year through hotel bookings, restaurants and other spend, it also improves the perceptions of the city internationally and protects businesses and jobs here,” Saunders adds.

But the office isn’t just a resource for location-hungry scouts, it also provides a one-stop (and free) solution, ensuring key services are aware of production requests and activities. Road closures, health and safety checks, getting property owners onside - for a small team of three, the office generates £200 for every £1 the Council spends on its services.

If only every big budget Hollywood film had such lucrative returns on investment.

“There’s no doubt we’re directly responsible for Liverpool being the most filmed city outside London,” Saunders says.

And the team’s not just attracting A list celebs to the city, but prized advertising campaigns too - such as the sublime Evoque launch, which saw the Car of The Year careen through our city streets, like some outtake from Minority Report.
READY FOR ITS CLOSE UP
“Production levels are at an all-time high, with an increase of 23 per cent compared to last year,” Saunders reveals, adding that more than 260 productions, from commercials to Hollywood films, generated a record £24m into the local economy in the past 12 months.

Recent successes include Kenneth Branagh’s ‘Jack Ryan’ starring Keira Knightly and Kevin Costner plus the biggest movie ever to shoot in Liverpool, or indeed the UK, ‘Fast & Furious 6’ with a budget of $250m. Must be something about our streets that attracts sleek super cars! That and the fact that we’re a pretty compact city, making it easier to get around - allowing the units to squeeze more filming out of their days.

The recent ‘Utopia’ series, one of the most expensive productions ever to hit Channel 4’s listings, saw Liverpool beat off stiff competition from other UK Cities to clinch this £5m primetime drama, actually set in London.

“Lots of photos, visits and tours around city locations were required before a decision was made,” Saunders reveals, “but the end results speak for themselves. And just think of all that hotel accommodation, local security, cleaners, catering, actors and extras the production called for and you can see just how far reaching our work is.”

But the real stars? Saunders is in no doubt:

“The Council’s ‘can do’ attitude ensures Liverpool’s reputation in the industry for being ‘film friendly’ and, more often than not, we’re the first call they make when they are looking for picture-perfect locations.”

For more information about Liverpool Film Office go to liverpoolfilmoffice.tv
THERE’S NO DOUBT WE’RE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LIVERPOOL BEING THE MOST FILMED IN CITY OUTSIDE OF LONDON

Lynn Saunders
For three days this spring, the city will be transformed - as thousands arrive for what’s becoming the most important urban music and technology festival this side of the Atlantic.
If all is quiet when it visits Sound City's Baltic Triangle HQ, it’s most definitely the hush before the storm. Because, this spring, the world’s most exciting music and digital businesses, movers and shakers will arrive in the city to create an ensemble of thrilling gigs, keynote speeches, roundtable discussions and industry expos.

For three days in May, the hardworking team - under the direction of Sound City supremo Dave Pichilingi - will ensure that Liverpool is the epicentre of all that's new, innovative and exciting in music, media and technology.

An urban festival with edge, Sound City is, once again, showing the rest of the world that Liverpool’s pioneering spirit leads where others follow.

“We really needed something like this,” says Liverpool Vision’s Head of Creative and Digital, Kevin McManus, “Our musical heritage is, of course, very strong. But Dave’s idea for to make Liverpool a showcase for creativity, now, really completed our offer, and said to the world that we were investing in the future too.”

Since its inception during our Capital of Culture year the festival, originally conceived to celebrate the best of the north west’s music and digital creativity, has gone from strength to strength - and country to country.

This autumn sees the Sound City crew set up a new three day sister festival in Athens, Georgia (home to REM and Captain Beefheart). “It’s an incredible city,” Dave Pichilingi enthuses, “very much like Liverpool in its way, and extremely receptive to new ideas, and new ways of working.”

That first Liverpool event, five years ago, trailblazed its way into the consciousness of the music and digital community - offering a very Liverpool festival: a sociable, democratic and engaging route to the most innovative music and technology.

“Our round table discussions feature some of the most influential people from the modern industries,” Pichilingi says, “but we’re just as excited to hear from start ups, bedroom producers and students too. There’s no dividing line. We know the most exciting things can come from the most surprising of places, that’s what’s so unique about our festival.”

The world’s most exciting music and digital businesses, movers and shakers will arrive in the city to create an ensemble of thrilling gigs, keynote speeches, roundtable discussions and industry expos.

To date, events have been held deep within the Arctic Circle, in sunny Dubai, New York and Texas. And more events are planned. But, as the festival’s creator Dave Pichilingi attests:

“These events are all flagpoles, spreading the word, and telling the world that Liverpool is the place to be. It’s our spiritual home, and will always be home to the main event.”

And this year’s main event is set to be even bigger, bolder, more ambitious than ever.

“Music and sound touches on so many different things,” he says, “and it’s our job to make those connections, and present a conference that offers interest, diversity, genuinely thrilling keynote speakers and the chance for everyone, from a band in Toxteth to the head of global music brands, to mix things up and create something special.”
EVERYONE’S IN THE MIX
TOGETHER THESE DAYS, THAT’S WHY MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY IS SUCH AN EXCITING AREA TO BE IN NOW

Dave Pichilingi

A festival of two halves (daytime conferences and must-see night time gigs) this year’s event features FUTUREPROOF: a series of events designed specifically to enable digital and games SMEs to meet with the buyers, investors, publishers and brands who can propel their companies to the next level.

“It’s really about getting the most interesting people - whether they’re app developers, A&R experts, industry watchers or digital marketeers - into a room, and getting them to talk,” Pichilingi explains.

This year, delegates can really get involved too: with round table discussions putting everyone in control of the conversation. It’s that informal, democratic barrier-breaking that sets Sound City apart from the rest. And it’s why its already punching well above its weight.

“I remember Martyn Davies (head of influential digital and mobile music company, Six Two Productions) coming up to me after the last Sound City and just saying ‘Wow, why don’t we do more things in Liverpool?’ That’s the effect this city has on people.”

Maybe that’s why, this year, delegates are - despite tough times - travelling to our corner of the globe from Australia, Taiwan, China and Argentina and all points inbetween.

“Many claim it, but we really are an international affair,” McManus says, “And that’s thanks to Dave’s enthusiasm and commitment, to the festival, and to the city.”

“We’re not a Liverpool event, “ Pichilingi adds, “We’re an international event, based in Liverpool. There was always a perception that this could have been a parochial event. I think we’ve proved the doubters wrong. And, thanks to the positive support from the City Council, we’ve been able to showcase a city at the top of its game.”

As McManus says, no one can touch our musical heritage, but the music industry has always been London, New York and LA-centred. Now, thanks to digital technologies, the playing field is blown wide open. And we’re all invited to shape our musical future.

“Everyone’s in the mix together these days,” McManus confirms, “that’s why music and technology is such an exciting area to be in now.”

“That’s how it is in Liverpool, and how it is in Sound City. We capture that and, hopefully, inspire everyone who attends,” Pichilingi adds.

With a roll call of the hottest new and emerging bands playing around the city for three intense nights, the city will definitely be the place to strut your stuff and discover the next big thing before the rest of the world does.

Florence and the Machines, Enter Shikari, Ed Sheeran and Paloma Faith all set out on the road to stardom from Liverpool.

“It’s the breadth and depth of what we offer, the enthusiasm and the passion, coupled with the fact that the festival is held in the greatest city in the world that really makes Sound City special,” Pichilingi says. “It’s great when people who either haven’t been here, or haven’t been here for a while come to me and say ‘what an amazing, beautiful and inspiring place Liverpool is’. “

For further information go to liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk
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THE best business opportunities can come from the most unlikely of places. Who’d have thought angry birds, bottled tap water or a computer without a keyboard would all be taken to our hearts so much in recent years?

It’s the ability to look at the world with inquisitive eyes, and to spot an opportunity that’s been overlooked by others, that separates out the true entrepreneur from the rest of us. And the best ideas? They’re usually staring us in the face. It’s a vision thing. Some of us have it, some don’t.

Liverpool’s Trendy Vend is one such success story. And it’s an idea that could only have come from a city that loves to look good.

Blending the latest vending technology with essential grooming-on-the-go products, Trendy Vend offers an instant fix to party animals on the prowl.

You’ll spot their sleek pamper stations in stylish bars, clubs and restaurants around the country. Stocked with a range of essential lip glosses, eye shadows, perfumes and deodorants (as well as Gaviscon and Pro-Plus tablets to keep you fuelled for a large night out) these mini lifesavers are the party equivalent to first aid stations, judiciously placed for a quick spritz and fix in the powder room.

And, in a clever, business-sassy move, they also feature a built-in HD LCD screen with ‘Trendy TV’, advertising the latest grooming products to hit the high street.

It’s caught up with the Trendy Vend team, sisters Kayleigh and Talia Baccino.

HOW DID TRENDY VEND BEGIN?

We were both studying marketing at LJMU and one of the modules had been looking at creating your own business. We were enjoying a night out and we noticed the girls all borrowing lip gloss off each other in the toilets and complaining about their hair going flat. So we came up with the idea of ‘pamper stations’ - vending machines which could be placed in the toilets of quality bars and clubs, filled with top branded cosmetic and grooming products and we also thought we could put media screens onto them and double our revenue.

When we graduated, we immediately set up Trendy Vend and since then we have worked hard to develop a strong brand. We are really proud to say it is a brand which attracted £1m of private investment 18 months ago which demonstrates real confidence in our company and has allowed us to expand across the country.

We now have our vending machines in 300 exclusive venues from Brighton to Newcastle and we employ 17 people with offices in Liverpool, Manchester and London.

WHAT BUSINESS SUPPORT HAVE YOU RECEIVED ALONG THE WAY?

We received a small grant from LJMU’s Enterprise Fellowship Programme to get us started and then we looked around for more funding opportunities and entered the Morgan Foundation Entrepreneur Awards in 2009 which won us a further £10k of investment. This allowed us to roll out to more new bars which in turn attracted our first big advertising client, a local solicitor. There is financial help out there from a variety of sources if you keep looking for it.

WE NOW HAVE OUR VENDING MACHINES IN 300 EXCLUSIVE VENUES FROM BRIGHTON TO NEWCASTLE AND WE EMPLOY 17 PEOPLE WITH OFFICES IN LIVERPOOL, MANCHESTER AND LONDON

We also received both financial and mentoring support from Step Clever, a Government funded programme to support new businesses and we also had support from Liverpool Vision who came out to our office in the early days and gave us advice on marketing our business. We also visited Vision’s offices for information and support on IT and our website. It saved us having to pay out for this support and helped to keep our costs down but it also helped to introduce us to people who helped our business to grow.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE IN BUSINESS?

We both admire Michelle Mone and her company Ultimo, the designer lingerie brand. Like us, she came up with an idea on a night out and she turned it into a thriving business and she’s been so successful juggling family life with business, that’s a real inspiration to us. We also admire Steve Morgan because he came from our area, went to the same schools and colleges, created his own business and turned it into a multi-million pound operation.

WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE SOMEONE WANTING TO SET UP THEIR OWN BUSINESS?

You will face good days and bad days. You might be on the brink of losing everything but you have to keep focused on what you’re doing and keep going. If you do lose things, no matter how hard it gets, don’t give up and carry on. In the end you will achieve success if you believe in yourself.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE IN 10 YEARS’ TIME?

We would like to have built up Trendy Vend into an international company and sold it for millions of pounds! That would then give us the time and money to invest in new ventures and we’d like to give something back to the area we’re from, Norris Green, and do something for the local community.

For further information go to trendyvend.co.uk
AT YOUR CONVENIENCE

How a bad hair day turned into a good business opportunity for two Liverpool sisters...
WHEN, later this year, Liverpool’s grand old Lewis’s department store will emerge from its cloak of scaffolding, it’ll mark the latest chapter in our city’s remarkable retail transformation.

True, the veritable store will have been nipped and tucked beyond recognition - transformed into a swish new apartment hotel, parade of restaurants and stylish boutiques - but its renaissance, and its ingenious new triumphal arch slicing clean through the centre of the old store’s facade, signals a gateway into a new era. More than that, it’ll create a completely new area - for the store backs onto a seven acre site which, for over a century, has been little more than a disused goods depot. Now, in the midst of a succession of seismic high street closures, developer Merepark is creating a compact zone of cinemas, water features, new-to-Liverpool restaurants and two-tier shopping streets.

As a bullish show of strength in straitened times, it’s hard to ignore. And further proof that this city is built to confound expectations.

For Liverpool City Central’s BID Chief Executive, Ged Gibbons, the development couldn’t have come at a better time:

“It’s phenomenal,” he tells it’s, “Central Village will be the key gateway into the city from all points south and west. It will transform our offer. It’s that simple.”

Yet, despite its promise of new brands, and a new concept cinema, it’s the opportunity for greater movement through the city centre’s distinct shopping zones that most impresses Gibbons.

“I met Mary Portas recently, and she was excited to hear about how the Village was progressing, and of how it will help give Bold Street’s independent character a new lease of life. She says that’s one of her favourite shopping streets in Britain.”

SO WHAT, EXACTLY IS CENTRAL VILLAGE?

At its core, the £160m development will offer a glittering procession of restaurants, hotels, shops and offices, connecting this sleepy backwater to the bo-ho shops of Bold Street, the nightlife of Ropewalks and the heart of the city’s traditional shopping streets.

“It’s incredible to see that, in the past five years or so, the city centre has become a place where there are more coffee shops than pubs, where people spend afternoons enjoying afternoon tea in Leaf, and where the experience is everything,” Gibbons says.

There was a time when entire families would come to Liverpool to spend a Saturday in Lewis’s – mum in the salon, dads and kids playing with the toys, only to meet up again for lunch.

Yet, despite its unsinkable place in all our collective memories, the last days of Lewis’s saw the indomitable store limp towards its inevitable final chapter. The days when single shops were as big as a cathedral long since gone.
When it’s visits, the store is being fitted out for its new life as a stylish new zone of apartments and restaurants. Heavy plant machinery trundles across floors that once housed haberdashers, milliners and salons.

“They don’t make buildings like this any more,” says Richard Peel, from developers Merepark. “It’s like we’re refitting the Titanic. The scale is immense. And the build quality is incredible. Just look at these girders – those rivets look like they went in yesterday,” he says, pointing to the building’s bright red skeleton of struts and supports, glistening in a sudden spring downpour.

“We knew we had to be sympathetic to the building’s redevelopment,” says Peel, as we take our hard-hat tour of the site. “And we’ve done what they can to preserve, at least, a flavour of the landmark we love so dearly.

But the biggest change soon becomes apparent: the building is almost sliced in two: Epstein’s famously naked ‘Liverpool Resurgent’ statue (known by successive generations of Scousers as ‘Dickie Lewis’ - for reasons we’ll leave you to figure out) rises over a processional archway through into the heart of the village. It’s the city’s newest street: a steep sided canyon diving straight into a new decompression zone, where footsore shoppers can come and rest, as day turns to evening, and retail turns, seamlessly, to leisure.

“We were really keen to create new access routes into the development, and encourage people to flow through the site, and on to Bold Street and the Ropewalks,” Peel says.

Peel points to Liverpool ONE’s masterplan – and the sure-footed, sleek way it has connected the Albert Dock to the city. “Liverpool ONE was a game changer,” he says, “its execution was excellent. And it’s showed that public realm spaces and private management can really work together to benefit everyone.”

Liverpool ONE also showed what you can do with the city’s challenging topography: something Central Village knows only too well: “The site slopes five levels from one end to the other,” says Peel. There’s no such thing as level ground in Liverpool!

Rising above the site, two 20-storey-plus residential towers, and the UK’s first new-concept, boutique ODEON cinema, will complete the development in a year’s time, and act as a landmark to the city’s latest audacious capital investment.

“We’re not another Liverpool ONE,” Peel points out, “our offer is more leisure and entertainment, a place where the city can come to unwind, spend their free time, meet friends and enjoy themselves.”

And, when you think about it, that’s not too far away from a day at Lewis’s after all. Looks like Epstein’s iconic ‘Liverpool Resurgent’ statue is as aptly named now as it was sixty years ago.

For further information go to centralvillageliverpool.com
LIVERPOOL has had few more celebrated ‘ambassadors’ than Roger McGough. He is to poetry what The Beatles are to music - many feel they have come to know the city through his words.

Often referred to as the ‘Scouse Laureate’, Roger McGough has been described as the ‘Patron Saint of Poetry’ by the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy and is the current President of the Poetry Society, as well as presenter of BBC Radio 4’s ‘Poetry Please.’

He came to prominence at the end of the decade in which the world danced to Liverpool’s beat and was part of the extraordinary wave of creativity that emerged from the city’s Everyman Theatre.

It was at this famous venue on Hope Street, with fellow Liverpudlians Brian Patten and Adrian Henri, that he first performed his poetry. In 1967 they published The Mersey Sound which became the best selling poetry anthology of all time, making their names and doing as much for Liverpool’s reputation for wordplay and irreverent humour as those in the pop parade.

Roger made his mark there too, as part of the musical comedy trio, ‘The Scaffold’, with John Gorman and Mike McCartney, notching up three top ten hits, including a number one with ‘Lily the Pink’.

His prolific output of verse is testament to the poet’s solitary life (His latest collection ‘As Far As I Know’ has not long been published), but in recent years Roger has found further success in collaboration, with Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Ayden, the artistic director and chief executive of Liverpool’s Everyman and Playhouse theatres.

His masterful adaptations of the 17th century French playwright, Molère, have received huge acclaim - firstly with the classic farce ‘Tartuffe’, then with ‘The Hypochondriac’ and the third in the series, ‘The Misanthrope’. “The tricolour”, as he refers to them.

“I was working on a Saga cruise and took the script with me to try it and if I couldn’t do it, I’d be miles away, but I got into it very quickly and sent some scenes to them and they said: “Yes, carry on”.”

All the ‘McGoughieres’ have been performed at The Playhouse, before spreading the Liverpool name on a nationwide tour. Roger may have preferred The Everyman, but it is being rebuilt, opening later in 2013.

Roger admits it’s a place he misses: “I read my first poems there, the first Scaffold sketches were performed there. I was emotionally attached to the place and the Bistro - after rehearsing I’d always end up in there and so there has been a hole and I can’t wait for the new place to open. It will be great.”

Next up for Roger is a Spring trip to Dubai with his Liverpool Doors project – using doors as canvasses for his wit and poetry - and later in the year, back in Dubai, for ‘Stanzas in the Desert.’

“It tickles me forever when I go away because people come to see me and say “I’m from Liverpool.” They seek you out, they travel hundreds of miles to come and see you just because you’re from Liverpool. It doesn’t seem happen to the other poets and I love it and I expect it and I would do the same, it’s a tribal thing, really.”

Maybe it’s because, as Roger observes, they have been brought up in a city where language is the currency. And they, like Roger, are also ambassadors. He ends: “Everything you do, you do for Liverpool, in a way.”

The Misanthrope runs in Liverpool until March 9, UK tour from March 26 - June 15.

For further information go to rogermcgough.org.uk

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