

10 June 2008

**ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE OPERATOR RECOMMENDED FOR £100 MILLION
BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SCHEME**

A leading national leisure operator has been recommended to work with Arun District Council and St Modwen to provide a new top quality entertainment venue in Bognor Regis.

Openwide International was recommended by a selection panel comprising of representatives from the Council, St Modwen, Locum Consulting, Bognor Regis Town Council and the Bognor Regis Regeneration Vision Group as the preferred operator of the proposed new Entertainment Centre as part of St Modwen's £100 million regeneration of the town centre.

The panel's recommendation has been accepted by St Modwen and the Bognor Regis Sub Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 10 June. The Sub Committee has now recommended Openwide as the preferred operator to the Full Council in July for the Council's final approval.

The selection panel's decision followed a rigorous and extensive selection process that began in October 2007.

After eight initial Expressions of Interest, Openwide and local group Arun Arts were short-listed for interviews with the selection panel to demonstrate their suitability and detail their proposals for the scheme.

The Chair of the selection panel Sean Young, from Locum Consulting, said in his final report that the recommendation has been made in the best interests of Bognor Regis and the seafront development proposals.

"The selection panel recognises that choosing a preferred operating partner for the proposed Bognor Regis Entertainment Centre is not simply a process of analysis and scoring against criteria," he summarised.

"The panel has taken some considerable time to build a working relationship with the two short-listed companies and believe that the majority of issues that could influence the decision making process have all been considered.

"Ultimately, it is the panel's unanimous decision that the involvement of Openwide International represents the best possible opportunity for the long term and successful delivery of a dynamic and vibrant entertainment programme for Bognor Regis seafront."

Mr Young outlined Openwide's proposals for the entertainment venue, which include a main venue consisting of a 500-seat auditorium with orchestra pit; three to five dedicated cinema screens; a restaurant and sea-front bar; meeting room space and further public space with backstage areas.

Across the wider seafront area, they propose the development of the public spaces of the main building to include indoor surfing, a children's adventure park and climbing walls. They also propose integrating the seafront with the promenade with attractions such as a classic carousel and children's rides, a winter ice-rink and a coastal restaurant.

If Full Council accepts the Sub Committee's recommendation, Openwide International will enter into a period of exclusivity to work up design, operation and commercial arrangements in greater detail. The precise and detailed nature of the new provision ingredients will form the basis of discussions throughout the exclusivity period.

Openwide, who describe themselves as "specialising in the strategic planning, design, development and operation of theatres, museums, attractions and heritage sites," are currently the managers and operators of Bournemouth Pier and theatre, Cromer Pier and Pavilion Theatre in Norfolk, and the Spa Pavilion theatre in Felixstowe.

Their experience in the production, programming and presentation of the performing arts and in the operation of wider seafront destinations was considered a particular strength by the selection panel.

The selection panel extended its thanks to all of the potential operating partners, but particularly Openwide International and Arun Arts, for their hard work and efforts in presenting their proposals for the Entertainment Centre.

Councillor Norman Dingemans, Chairman of the Bognor Regis Sub Committee, said:

"This has been an in-depth and thorough selection process that interested many potential operators but was finally contested by two very strong candidates.

"That this process has attracted such interest proves the importance of the entertainment provision as a key feature in the Bognor Regis regeneration plans. Together with St Modwen, we intend to work with the recommended operator to provide the town with the high-quality facilities it hopes for and deserves."

Gary Morris, Senior Development Manager of St Modwen expressed his delight at the panel's decision:

"We are convinced that Openwide will deliver the quality and variety of entertainment that matches the vision of our regeneration proposals. I would like to thank Adam Cunard and colleagues from Arun Arts for their hard work and the quality of their submission. We will now seek to build on the good relationship established with them during the selection process to ensure that until construction commences, they are able to continue to deliver their programme of entertainment in the best manner possible.

"I would also like to state that the selection panel in particular appreciates the fact that both Arun Arts and Openwide International have formally supported the thoroughness, openness and fairness of the process.

"Assuming the decision is approved by Full Council, we look forward to working closely with Openwide during the period of exclusivity to finalise the details that will see the Locum's vision for the Entertainment Centre become reality."

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

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