

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Travelodge continues city centre growth

ONE of the UK's biggest hotel chains is using recent economic tough times to expand its business at low-cost prices.

Travelodge is currently building 34 new hotels this year – including eight in London and one in Greenwich High Road.

The company says this will create 700 new jobs and will boost the company's stock to 495 hotels across the country.

Guy Parsons, Travelodge Chief Executive said: "The hotels we will build this year have been a result of Travelodge's commitment to expand during the recession whilst many companies put their development on hold.

"Last year we exchanged on 96 sites making it a record year. Fifty two of these exchanges were part of the biggest transaction in the hotel sector since 2008 with the pub chain Mitchells & Butlers."



Confidence is returning

THE majority of London's businesses are confident their prospects will improve in 2011, a survey has revealed.

The latest Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) found nearly all key business indicators improved in the last quarter of 2010.

Domestic sales rose by 12 per cent from the third quarter and there were also rises in economic indicators including turnover, output and cash flow.

And for the first time since the Northern Rock crisis in February 2008, a majority of the capital's firms (53 per cent) believe their own prospects will improve in the months to come. The business community is also still supportive of the coalition government's policies, with 71 per cent now saying they are fairly or very confident in their handling of the economy, up from 67 per cent last quarter.

Colin Stanbridge, chief executive of the LCCI, said: "The closing months of 2010 were much better for London's firms but it is unclear how January's VAT rise and continuing cuts in government spending will affect confidence as we look ahead in to the New Year.

"The coalition's economic action plan does appear to be retaining the support of the business community but close attention is being paid to a new raft of employment proposals which if not properly considered could hamper companies' long term growth."

Good Samaritan attacked by homophobes after gig

By **JOHN HYDE**
 john.hyde@archant.co.uk

A GOOD Samaritan who tried to stop homophobic abuse was beaten on board a Tube train.

The 39-year-old victim was leaving The O2 on the

westbound Jubilee Line after a Suede gig when he intervened to stop a group making remarks to another passenger.

The gang of five men then assaulted the man, leaving him with bruising to his eyebrow and cheek.

The victim got off the train at Southwark but the group, who were travelling with two women, are believed to have left the Tube at Green Park.

Investigating officer BTP Detective Constable Steve Ajayi said: "The victim was merely trying to keep the peace and was assaulted for his trouble. The train would have been very busy at the time of the incident with people going home after the Suede concert at the O2 Arena, and I am appealing for anyone who witnessed the incident to get in contact."

The suspects, all aged in their late teens or early 20s, were already on board the train so are believed to have boarded at Stratford, West Ham, or Canning Town.

The incident happened around

11.20pm on December 7.

Anyone who witnessed this incident is asked to contact BTP on 0800 40 50 40, quoting background log B7 of 14/01/2011. Alternatively, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Widdecombe calls truce with Paxman



Ann Widdecombe and Jeremy Paxman have clashed in the past but are uniting for homeless charity

THEY'VE had plenty of battles over the years, but now Jeremy Paxman and Anne Widdecombe have joined forces for a good cause.

The BBC presenter and politician-turned-dancer have agreed to be patrons of the Canning Town-based homeless charity Anchor House.

They will help to publicise and work on a massive project to give the shelter a radical makeover to bring it into the 21st century.

Anchor House director Keith Fernet said: "Jeremy and Ann are strong advocates of finding long-term solutions to homelessness and we are very

pleased to have their support.

"They will be working with us to help raise £15.6 million through our capital appeal to ensure our much needed work in the Newham community continues."

More than 300 homeless people have been helped back on their feet over the past two years thanks to Anchor House, but now the 50-year-old hostel and life skills centre is in dire need of a new facility.

"Our mission is to build a new 21st century building, with a purpose-built block of 25 move-on studio flats, workshops, a new catering training facility, leisure and recreational areas," Mr

Fernet added.

"Full planning permission has already been secured and we have raised £6 million so far, but more support is needed.

"We've come a long way. Five years ago we were at risk of closing down, but we have reinvented ourselves – providing accommodation support for more than 180 single homeless people each year."

In support of Homeless Sunday on January 30, Anchor House's fundraising team and volunteers will be collecting all this week at Waterloo, Liverpool Street, London Bridge Railway Stations and the Canary Wharf shopping malls.

Wharf businesses raise £40k for youngsters

CANARY Wharf businesses put their weight behind an appeal that saw more than £40,000 donated to east London youngsters.

Sixty-two groups, including Docklands Outreach, a charity that offers advice and support to young



people in Tower Hamlets, benefitted from East

London Business Alliance's (ELBA) toy appeal, which finished on January 7.

The scheme has been running for eight years, but this year for the first time staff from the various companies could choose from online 'gift lists' set up by

the community groups accessed through retailer John Lewis's site.

Sarah Ashe from ELBA said: "The gift list has been really successful and has made it much easier for staff to take part in the appeal. It has also allowed

them to get more involved by being able to choose exactly which toy they would like to buy. People spent more than £3,000 in gift vouchers alone."

The number of toys given over the campaign was around 4,500.

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