



Driving Sustainable Change for the Royal Parks

Overview

The Royal Parks (TRP) is a registered charity charged with maintaining the Royal Parks within London.

TRP were looking for support to drive the business transformation to a sustainable change and embed a lasting in-house delivery model. They required an experienced team who could provide the necessary knowledge and associated expertise of the leisure industry, the various operating models, the commerciality of the business, and provide project management - all whilst balancing it with elements of the charitable and risk adverse nature of the organisation.

TRP issued a tender opportunity in December 2021/January 2022, to secure a business transformation/transition team to insource the public swimming services at the Serpentine Lido in Hyde Park and recreational boat hire services in The Regent's Park and Hyde Park.

The Challenge

The boating services had been outsourced under separate concession contract arrangements for over 30 years, with the latest concession contracts ending on 31 October 2021. In terms of the public swimming services at the Serpentine Lido, these services had also been outsourced for over 10 years with the latest concession contract ending in September 2019. Swimming services were closed in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, but reduced public swimming was provided during 2021 in line with restrictions at the time.

The key motivations for insourcing were three-fold:

- To improve the quality of the customer experience
- Provide a uniform tariff across the parks and
- To improve the commercial return to TRP

As part of the insourcing project, TRP planned to invest in excess of £1m on a new boat fleet, building refurbishments at both parks, an online booking system, and uniforms.



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V4S successfully secured the contract and commenced the project on 16 February 2022. The initial phase was to ensure the new insourced services were operational by the week commencing 4 July 2022, and the second phase was to provide post-go-live reviews e.g. Week 1 and Month 1 observations, and to develop a draft business case and finalise the Target Operating Model.

TRP planned to reopen the boating and swimming services 7 days per week during the season, with the Children's Pond operating at weekends and during school holidays. Go-live date to open the services was during week commencing 4 July 2022. The key objective was to open on time and safely.

There were several challenging aspects to the project including:

- The speed at which the project needed to progress to achieve the opening date. This required:
 - the development of a project plan and the establishment of strong governance and communications.
 - bringing along the other corporate departments who had already established their workplans for the year.
 - securing experienced staff at management levels as well numerous casual staff to work over the 3 locations during the first year's trading. The casual recruitment was critically supported by a third-party supplier which worked very well.
 - development of rotas for staff ensuring appropriate levels of health and safety for customers on each activity, a key requirement particularly for the first year's trading.
- Establishing the role of V4S' support to TRP and maximising the experience and expertise available in relation to key aspects i.e., the build and installation of the booking system, the drafting of the NOPs/EAPs and drafting of the staff rotas.
- Balancing the needs of a potentially highly commercial operation without losing the 'experience' for customers, while ensuring highly influential stakeholders were content.
- Delivery of the TOM – the financial blueprint for the desired state aligning to operating capacity and objectives. As with all projects, the TOM needed to be flexible allowing the project to work through external factors, change in priorities, and shifts in thinking. In the end, the values of the TOM were arrived at and TRP is now delivering a steady state model.
- Efficiently sourcing the necessary 'shopping list' for operations e.g. buoyancy aids, storage, children's pedalos, staff uniforms.

The project was managed effectively through collaboration which was closely monitored through separate weekly team and strategic meetings.

Close to the go-live date, two test events were completed which proved relatively successful albeit with very low numbers of 'guests'. The events did give the newly recruited staff an opportunity to practice the necessary 'boarding' and 'disembarking' procedures fully.



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The Solution

The project was successfully delivered, with both the boating and swimming services commencing on 5 July 2022 in a safe manner. The Commercial Team and many other departments within TRP worked tirelessly with V4S to complete such an ambitious timeline for this project.

While overall the project was successfully delivered, the introduction of online booking via the booking system was not achieved for opening. This was delayed by several weeks, although on-site bookings/payments were achieved by the go-live date.

Following opening of the services, a Post-Live Week 1 and Month 1 reviews were completed and reported on to the operations team. Given the relative inexperience of the newly recruited staff, a number of areas for improvement were reported at the Week 1 review with very definitive improvements demonstrated by completion of the month 1 review.

The Outcomes

Throughout the project, the Commercial and Operations teams were engaged and made a positive contribution to the project, ensuring that the facilities were operational and ready for public opening in the first week of July 2022.

The services opened to the public on 5 July 2022, in line with the target date. This meant that the start of the contract to the 'go-live' date was just less than 4.5 months and, to achieve a safe operation in this period of time, was definitely a successful outcome for the project team. It was anticipated that the operation season would finish in mid-September for Swimming and end of October for boating, but TRP instead commenced the piloting boating services through the winter months in order to retain experienced operational team leaders.

Key Outcomes

The key success was the opening of the services safely in line with the very ambitious timetable.

Since then, the boating and swimming operations have gone from strength to strength with the initial target income for the first season being exceeded and, in addition, a retail unit at Hyde Park has been opened to compliment the business.



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