



Main: Bon Jovi at St Mary's Stadium
Inset: The Rose Bowl

Coming up roses: Stadia can generate new revenue by gaining permission for alternative uses

With business rates, utility costs and maintenance expenditure, stadia are costly premises to run. Therefore it is no surprise that operators are now seizing every opportunity to generate extra revenue – either by upgrading their facilities to improve the spectator experience and increase attendance, or by investigating alternative additional uses for their stadia.

Paris Smith & Randall's team of planners and lawyers, headed by Janet May, has been assisting Hampshire Cricket Club and Southampton Football Club to do just that. At the Rose Bowl Stadium, the home of Hampshire Cricket Club, it is working with the club on a major development proposal, which includes a 175-bed four-star hotel, conferencing, two covered stands to increase current permanent seating capacity to 15,000, and an 18-hole golf course.

Over the last two years the team has gained permissions to allow the club to make ground improvements and use the stadium for non-sport events. These measures made a substantial difference to the club's revenue stream, and improved spectator experiences.

In April 2005, planning permission was obtained for the installation of world-class

floodlights, allowing the club to use them on a more frequent basis. This season the Rose Bowl will host five televised Twenty20 cricket matches, four of which will be played under the permanent floodlights, giving flexibility in the start time so that matches can commence at 19.00. This increases attendance because spectators can attend after a day at work or school. Permanent floodlighting also has a distinct advantage when bidding against other international grounds for major international cricket match allocations, and is viewed as a plus by the English Cricket Board when assessing who will benefit from the allocation of night matches. A further spin off is the opportunity for more frequent television coverage.

Planning permission

The team has also assisted in maximising revenue on non-cricket days by obtaining planning permission to hold concerts at the Rose Bowl. The venue has hosted Oasis and The Who and this year's schedule includes Neil Diamond. At least one further concert is planned for 2008, and discussions are under way with major artists. The stadium has become one of two major open-air concert

venues available on England's south coast, with the capacity to attract an audience of 35,000. With sell-out successes on and off the field, obvious further financial benefits have been seen in the increase of food and beverage sales.

However, even if stadia do not require formal permission to allow alternative uses, there are always concerns to be assessed when increasing the number of visitors to stadium for a non-sporting event. These include transport impacts, the provision of adequate public transport, demand for on-site parking, the hours of work when the staging is being constructed, and noise levels. These issues can be addressed and the impact minimised by effective communication strategies, such as leaflet drops to local residents and public meetings – allowing residents to share concerns, and working to overcome these.

The Rose Bowl is not the only well-known stadium in the region – just 4.8 miles away is St Mary's Stadium, home to Southampton Football Club, one of the oldest football clubs in the world. The stadium was built on an inner-city site and opened in 2001, at that time costing around £32 million (US\$62.3 million) to construct.

Securing permission for concerts at the Rose Bowl was a direct result of following the successful model used at St Mary's Stadium. Planning permission to hold concerts at St Mary's was obtained in 2006, and it has now hosted artists such as Elton John and Bon Jovi to sell-out audiences. St Mary's Stadium is different to the Rose Bowl in that it is an inner-city site, and not able to expand in the same way as the Rose Bowl intends to; but it has seized the opportunity to maximise use of its stadium, and benefit from revenue streams generated from alternative uses such as concerts and conferencing.

Both clubs are now alive to the financial opportunities available and the team at Paris Smith & Randall continues to assist them with their further development plans.

Paris Smith & Randall LLP

tel: +44 238 048 2482

email: janet.may@parissmith.co.uk

www.parissmith.co.uk

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