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Hickton Sets the Standards at Leisurezone

Hickton has provided Clerk of Works Services on the new £20m state of the art Harlow Leisurezone. The development gives the town its first ever combined wet and dry sporting facility on one site. It is expected to receive around 700,000 visitors a year. The building is 14,000m² and built over three floors. It has a 25m x 8 lane swimming pool, changing facilities, crèche/nursery, along with on-site catering and bars.

Hickton has extensive experience in providing Clerk of Works services in the leisure sector, including several major swimming pool projects. A recent project that has benefited from Hickton's Clerk of Works services is the fast pool at Sunderland Aquatic Centre that is built to world record breaking standards.

The sports hall at Harlow Leisurezone is itself built to national club standard for badminton, basketball and trampolining and features a sprung, slip resistant floor. Creating a building that met these very high standards required the presence of a Hickton Clerk of Works to ensure construction was carried out exactly to specification.

A combination of steel frame and reinforced concrete construction is used on the building. The roof on the main pool hall has timber glulam beams and a barrelled roof. The glulam beams sit on top of steel columns and shoe brackets were then incorporated to hold them in place. Due to the size of the beams, there were a lot of factors to take into consideration during installation, such as loadings and stability and Hickton was closely involved on all these aspects.

There was over ten main glulam beams and the contractor was looking to install a set number each day. This required a considerable amount of coordination and the Hickton Clerk of Works was based on site to ensure the highest standards were met.

The building incorporates two curved standing seam roofs intersecting above the main swimming pool that are curved on both elevation and plan. Dual pitch feature skylights incorporating 326 individual panes of glass are used at the junction of these two roofs and at 7.0 metres, run across the spine of the building. This design required a complex glazing system to ensure long term performance of the building and Hickton worked with the contractor to ensure this was achieved.

Hickton's experience and expertise enabled it to cope with all requirements on this demanding project, however unusual. For example, following an ecological survey, one of the first challenges was to move Bee orchard plants to another site in the region. Although not on a protected list, these plants do enhance local diversity and they therefore had to be moved before work could progress.

Hickton was commissioned by The Harlow Gateway Partnership, consisting of Harlow District Council (HDC); Harlow and District Sports Trust (HDST); Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the national regeneration agency; and the Department for Communities and Local Government (ULG).

A Harlow Gateway spokesman said: "Harlow Leisurezone is now one of the most modern facilities in the East of England Region. We have been delighted with the services provided by all parties on site." The Leisurezone has already been listed as a training facility for elite athletes in the run up to the London 2012 Olympics.

