

...urse for £100m turnover and a stock market listing

PICTURE: JIM HOLDEN

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GOING PLACES: Paul Evans reckons his travel company will one day be a £100m operation, possibly with a stock market listing

not to be confused with "no-frills". The hotels you can book on lowcostbeds.com are not necessarily cheap, just good value.

Low overheads - the company only employs 35 people - and the fact that he has experienced buyers cutting deals with hotels directly, means prices are kept down.

I wonder what differentiates his business model from Lastminute.com.

"There are similarities but we just focus on travel.

"Lastminute.com was sold for £250 million but it never made a bean. Why? Because it was a built on flights and you can't make any money out of flights.

"We do flights because people need to get from A-B, but it is not the focus of our business, there's just no money in it. We could make some money this year." It is perhaps no surprise that travel is in

Paul's blood. He was born in London to a British father and Brazilian mother but spent his childhood first in Argentina and, for the most part, Angola.

Between the ages of 12 and 17 he attended Eton College, flying back to Africa at the end of each term to spend holidays with his family.

His family moved back to Britain in 1976 when civil war broke out in Angola.

The family home was attacked on the day they left.

Although he has spent most of his career in the travel industry it was during a brief spell as an animal keeper at Port Lympne Zoo in Kent shortly after graduating from Bristol University where he met his wife.

She was a gorilla keeper. He looked after six Indian elephants. His predecessor had been killed doing his job. His successor also lost his life. It looks like he got out in the nick of time.

"It's a very dangerous job. Trying to get bull elephants to do any-

thing is extremely dangerous. Every morning I had to put a chain on an elephant's ankle to coax it into a pen.

"All it had to do was roll over at one specific point and I would have been dead. Looking back I must have been crazy to do it. Not brave just stupid!"

Paul, who lives in Sharpthorne, West Sussex, has three children.

He has a monthly diary page in Travel Weekly and is a regular contributor to the Steve Wright Show on BBC Radio 2 and was recently on Radio 4's 'You & Yours'.

His ambition is to make lowcost as familiar as Virgin or Easy. "But only travel," he says, "I am only interested in travel." james.lancaster@theargus.co.uk

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Make illegal immigrants pay tax, says think tank

ALLOWING half a million people who live illegally in the UK to stay in Britain and pay taxes could net the Government £1 billion a year, according to a report.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) said deporting illegal migrants could cost the taxpayer £4.7 billion.

Sending hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants out of the country, especially those who have lived in Britain for many years, was "simply not feasible", the think tank argued.

Some immigration restrictions had the "perverse effect" of encouraging migrants to stay longer than they intended, said the report.

The study drew on evidence that the increased security of the US border with Mexico may be keeping more immigrants in the country.

Nick Pearce, ippr director, said: "Nobody likes illegal immigration, and the subject is a deeply difficult one for politicians to tackle. But the bare truth is that we are not going to deport hundreds of thousands of people from the UK.

"Our economy would shrink and we would notice it straightaway in uncleaned offices, dirty streets and unstaffed pubs and clubs. So we have a choice - make people live in the shadows, exploited and fearful for the future, or bring them into the mainstream, to pay taxes and live an honest life."

Equal aims to provide city-wide training

EQUAL Brighton and Hove - a city-wide initiative that supports adults into training and employment - is up and running.

Equal funds projects by local organisations which help disadvantaged people into training and work. Its aim is to enhance people's employability and provide a skilled labour pool for employers.

The programme invites employers to get involved by offering work placements and employment opportunities.

The programme is championed by Martin Perry, chief executive of Brighton and Hove Albion, and Alan McCarthy, chief executive of Brighton & Hove City Council.

Contact Claire Mitchell on 01273 774796 or email Claire.Mitchell@bhbc.org.uk

Music chain opens its 20th outlet in region

MUSIC Zone, the national discount music and DVD retailer, opened a store in Horsham on Saturday. The shop, in Worthing Road, was acquired from MVC administrators in January and opened this weekend with a new interior.

Ben Wait, Music Zone's assistant manager said: "Sales have exceeded expectations and we are delighted with the response from customers."

Horsham brings the number of Music Zone stores in the South East to 20 and increases its national network to 102 outlets.