

Saturday, 16th June 2007

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## The Belgian with a passion for our Midland

THE new manager of the Midland Hotel is from Belgium – home of Brussels sprouts, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Hercule Poirot.



**IN CHARGE: Olivier Delaunoy.**

And just like the TV detective, who famously filmed scenes at the Midland in 1989, Olivier Delaunoy intends to use his 'little grey cells' to plot the renaissance of Morecambe's famous landmark.

At 6ft 5ins tall, and with a huge welcoming grin, Olivier cuts both an imposing and instantly likeable figure.

The 40-year-old former chef from Brussels speaks with great passion about the hotel, saying he 'fell in love with the Midland at first sight'.

"I have never been in a hotel that speaks to me like this one!" he laughs, with a twinkle in his eye.

Now as the Midland undergoes the process of extensive renovation, Olivier is hard at work planning for its eventual re-opening.

### Menus

It will not only be Olivier's job to manage the hotel when it opens, but he also has a major role in recruiting staff, plotting the interior designs, choosing the restaurant menus – basically having a hands-on approach to everything concerned with the running of the hotel.

"I love it but it is extremely hard work," he says.  
"It is like mixing a lot of ingredients together to make the most wonderful soup."

And Olivier should know all about that, having achieved just about everything he set out to achieve as a chef.

His career began in a two-star restaurant in Belgium, before he moved on to manage his own restaurant.

After moving to London he worked for Raymond Blanc's restaurant chain then again acquired his own

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restaurant in Oxford, before deciding to change tack and switch to the hotel industry.

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**Small**

He gained his knowledge of hotel managing while working for the City Inn chain, then set up his own successful project called 'Night Night' with a business partner.

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"The concept of 'Night Night' was to put the most luxurious facilities possible into the smallest hotel bedroom space," he explains.

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Sadly his partner died last July, and it was around that time when Olivier met Tom Bloxham, owner of Urban Splash.

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He was appointed to the post of Midland Hotel general manager on January 15, and now spends much of his time travelling to Morecambe from his home in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire.

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Olivier will eventually relocate to the resort and is looking forward to this immensely, having already developed a great affinity for the town.

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Like his colleagues in Urban Splash, he is determined to make sure the Midland once again becomes a hotel the town can be proud of.

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"We really want to get this right by developing something that is operationally wonderful and has a backbone, and somewhere where guests can feel welcomed and cared for," he says.

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"This hotel will have a heart and soul, and our guests will instantly feel great when they walk through the door.  
"Our staff will have personality.

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"I am known for recruiting people who have no skills, but have personality because skills can be trained – personality can't.

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"We are all extremely passionate about the Midland and are sure it will do wonders for this area."

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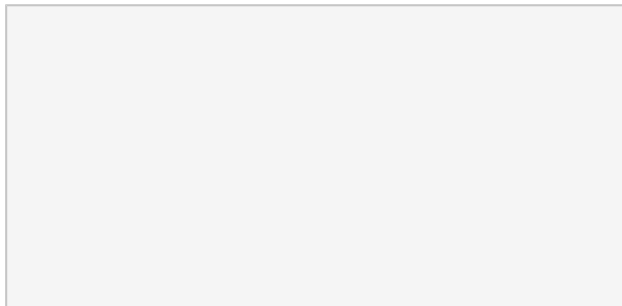
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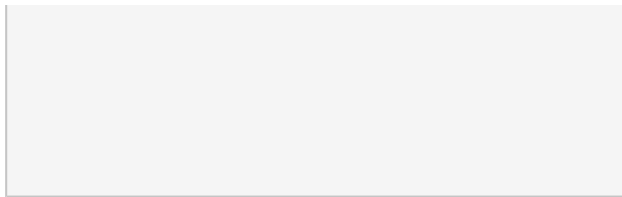
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