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Center Parcs welcomes first guests to Woburn Forest

Today marks the opening of Woburn Forest, the fifth Center Parcs Village in the UK. This new Village will inject over £20 million each year into the regional economy and welcome 350,000 guests per annum.

The creation of Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire has been backed by the

Prime Minister, David Cameron, who recognised Center Parcs' appeal to families as well as its wider economic importance.

The new Village builds on 27 years of Center Parcs' experience and commitment to providing great family breaks. It will be home to Center Parcs' largest Subtropical Swimming Paradise, along with an innovative Aqua Sana spa, 625 lodges, a 75 bedroom hotel, six Spa Suites and a host of restaurants, shops and leisure activities.

Martin Dalby, CEO of Center Parcs, said:

"After years of hard work, dedication and passion, we're thrilled to be welcoming our first guests to Woburn Forest today and strongly believe the new Village has all the ingredients for a very special family break. Woburn Forest, set in the undulating woodland of Bedfordshire, opens up the Center Parcs experience to more people in London and the South East.

"Center Parcs Woburn Forest will provide a massive boost to the area, injecting approximately £20 million per annum into the local and regional economy. In addition to the 1,200 people employed in the construction of Woburn Forest, we have recruited and trained 1,500 employees, 40% of whom are within the 16-24 age range and 90% live within 15 miles. These are local jobs for young local people."

Last year Center Parcs welcomed 1.7 million guests to its four existing Villages, the opening of Woburn Forest will increase that figure to over 2 million.

Woburn Forest is one of the largest development projects of its kind in Britain for many years and represents a £250 million investment. Center Parcs owners Blackstone invested £100 million in the project whilst the remaining £150 million was financed from four UK lending banks: Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland.

Joe Baratta, Global Head of Private Equity at Blackstone, said:

"When Blackstone acquired Center Parcs in 2006, the fifth Village at Woburn Forest was a dream in the midst of a lengthy, planning approval process. Today it is a reality, and we are very delighted to have supported this major project. It has brought jobs to the area and will provide a real boost to the local economy. Blackstone is proud of its support of this terrific British success story."

Summer breaks at Woburn Forest in June currently start from £399.
For more information or to make a booking, call 03448 266 266 or visit:
www.centerparcs.co.uk/woburn

Notes to editors

- In 2006, the asset management firm, Blackstone, acquired Center Parcs. An unprecedented investment programme then began,

- resulting in over £300 million being spent on accommodation, restaurants and retail outlets across the existing four Villages.
- Planning permission for the fifth Village, Woburn Forest, was gained in 2007 and construction began in 2012. The construction was completed on time and on budget and represents a £250m investment. The new Village has created a total of 1,500 new jobs in the region, in addition to the group's 6,000 employees across the existing four Villages.
 - Blackstone is one of the world's leading investment and advisory firms. It seeks to create a positive economic impact and long-term value for investors, the companies in which it invests, the companies it advises and to the broader global economy. Blackstone's asset management businesses include investment vehicles focused on private equity, real estate, hedge fund solutions, non-investment grade credit, secondary funds, and multi asset class exposures falling outside of other funds' mandates. Blackstone also provides various financial advisory services, including financial and strategic advisory, restructuring and reorganization advisory and fund placement services. Further information is available at www.blackstone.com.

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Notes to Editors

1. Center Parcs has five Villages across the UK; Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Elveden Forest in Suffolk, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire, Whinfell Forest in Cumbria and Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire which opened to guests on 6 June 2014
2. As the leader in the UK short break holiday market, Center Parcs regularly achieves average annual occupancy in excess of 97%
3. Center Parcs offers weekend, (Friday to Monday) or midweek (Monday to Friday) breaks and welcomes over 1.7 million guests each year, with 96% of guests expressing an intention to return
4. The Center Parcs concept is to provide a range of high quality accommodation, shops, restaurants and exceptional leisure facilities, carefully nestled amongst 400 acres of protected forest environment
5. This concept originated in Holland in 1967, with the first UK Center Parcs opening in 1987. Center Parcs is now a separate entity in the UK, owned by The Blackstone Group
6. Center Parcs has been awarded the following accolades since 2008:

the Green Business Award for Biodiversity Protection, Visit Britain 5 Star Rating, Hospitality Assured, Biodiversity Benchmark - Land Management, Carbon Trust Standard, Good Spa Guide Award, ISO14001, Investors in People

7. Center Parcs has recently been announced '[Best Family Holiday Provider](#)' in the Tommy's Awards for the eleventh year in a row

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