

ACQUISITION

New bosses for Park Finance Holdings

Brian Rogerson

Park Acquisitions Ltd (PAL), a joint venture company owned by Credit Suisse and Dr Roger Gewolb, has purchased Park Finance Holdings, together with its subsidiaries Park Motor Finance, Gateway Credit and Park Personal Loans, from Hermes Private Equity for an undisclosed sum.

Leasing Life believes that all Park Finance staff in the companies acquired are being retained under the new owners, as is the company's operational headquarters in Cardiff.

Previously Gewolb was chief executive of British Credit Trust (BCT) and Auto Credit Trust Group (ACT) both of which have operated over the last eight years in the UK non-prime finance market.

Gewolb, originally qualifying as a lawyer in Chicago, came to the UK in 1974 and brought to both BCT and ACT an



■ Dr Roger Gewolb

innovative and structured approach to non-prime lending – a speciality which, at the time, was in very early stages of development in the UK.

He is a firm proponent of offering competitively priced and structured finance products, whilst maintaining close relationships with business sources. Also, crucial for a non-prime lender, he has a record of inaugurating office procedures which closely monitor the ongoing perfor-

mance of agreements.

Park Asset Finance, the asset-finance arm of Park Asset Holdings, is not included in the transaction.

Prime finance

Seeking “significant” expansion in the short term, Gewolb aims to continue sourcing prime business through both the company's existing network of sales representatives and from the broker sector.

PAL is also commencing sourcing a range of non-prime business, initially near-prime, with the intention later of embracing deeper non-prime and in due course sub-prime.

In the transaction, PAL was advised by Simmons & Simmons and Deloitte, while Mishcon de Reya, DLA Piper, Nyman Libson Paul and Business Economics acted for Gewolb's management team.

M&A

GE wants more growth after buy-outs

GE Commercial Finance stepped up a gear last month with the announcement that it will acquire three leasing businesses. They include Amsterdam-headquartered Banque Artesia Nederland - which has £3.1bn of assets - the leasing arms of KG Allgemeine Leasing - Disko and ASL - and the car leasing business of Custom Fleet, based in Carlisle in the UK. Richard Laxer, president of GE Corporate Financial Services, said: “It's always been our objective to grow across Europe.”

RESULTS

The third quarter growth

Third quarter business volume at CIT swelled by 40 per cent year-on-year to total £5.8bn, while net revenues for the period reached £409.2m, a 15 per cent rise. Leasing and renting at Santander rose 20 per cent year-on-year in the last three months, while European lending at the bank rose 27 per cent to reach £171.9m. Blacks Leisure Group, which includes the Millets and Mambo brands, doubled its finance leasing spending during the last quarter to reach £0.6m. In other latest results, State-owned monopoly Russian Railways announced plans to spend 83 billion rubles (£1.6bn) in leasing investments over the next three years.

TIMELINE: PARK FINANCE HOLDINGS

2002 ➡ Peter Comber, previously deputy MD and finance director at Riggs Bank heads a team that acquires Cardiff-based Park Holdings with assistance from Hermes Private Equity and Barclays. The new company trades as Park Finance Group and consists of Park Asset Finance, Gateway Credit (non-prime motor) and Park Auto Finance (prime motor).

2003 ➡ The company moves to new head office to Cardiff with a grant from the Welsh Assembly. A portfolio review analysis, in conjunction with PricewaterhouseCoopers, confirms investment grade rating for ultimate securitisation.

2005 ➡ The company appoints seven staff from former Singer & Friedlander Finance. Gross receivables: £106m. New business: £7m each month. 80 staff. Part securitises a portion of book on a rolling basis to Capital Bank.

2006 ➡ The group, with the exception of Park Asset Finance, acquired by Park Acquisitions.