

The Landscape Group



Building a National Brand and Organisation during Austerity

Background to the deal

Elysian Capital supported the management buy out of The Landscape Group in March 2008 from Blue Diamond Services. Headquartered near Newbury the group was a leading provider of landscape construction and grounds and landscape maintenance with a focus on the south of England. With more than 600 employees and £38m in revenues, it had grown successfully on the back of local authorities' outsourcing of landscape services.

The group's origins date back to 1919, when English Landscapes was a business focussed on forestry management in the south of England. By the mid-70s the group added landscape construction and grounds maintenance to its service offering, and by 1990 these two activities accounted for almost two thirds of the group's business. The forestry interest was sold in 2002, and the group focussed on its landscape business.

Elysian was introduced to The Landscape Group's owners, Blue Diamond Services, a specialist cleaning business, through a proprietary contact and were attracted by the long term local authority contracts at a time when further outsourcing was very likely with the financial pressures on local government funding.

The growth strategy for The Landscape Group was a three-pronged approach:

- retain its existing local authority contracts and aim to deliver grounds maintenance services in a sustainable and profitable manner
- win new business, including from an increase in the percentage of outsourcing in the market
- extend geographic reach through acquisitions in a fragmented sector

“The Landscape Group changed significantly during Elysian's ownership. With the challenge of austerity impacting our local authority customers, they helped us define the strategy and then actively supported us through the transformation process as we reshaped the business into a high quality national player largely focused on contracted ground maintenance.”

Nick Temple-Heald, Chief Executive
The Landscape Group

“We were very attracted to the idea of long-term local authority contracts. The fact that, as we were going into a recession, there was likely to be more outsourcing of landscape services as times got tougher and money tighter, was also a major factor in our decision. Coupling this with the good potential for add-ons deals in that market place made it a great opportunity to acquire The Landscape Group as a platform for growth ”

Ken Terry, CEO Elysian

Elysian Capital LLP
Manfield House
1 Southampton Street
London
WC2R 0LR

T: +44 (0) 207 925 80 50

F: +44 (0) 207 925 80 69

elysiancapital.com

“The Elysian team were easy to work with even though they always challenged us to set demanding targets. There was no bureaucracy and they were always available when we needed to talk to them and quick to make decisions when required”

Doug Graham, Finance Director



Buy, Build, Brand – developing the organisation

Over the life of Elysian’s investment The Landscape Group grew from 600 employees and £38m in revenues to more than 1000 staff and revenues of £50 million.

The group made two acquisitions in September 2008 and March 2010 to add scale and coverage:

- Banyards Limited, a Dorset based grounds maintenance and landscaping company
- Western Landscapes Limited, trading as Wyevale Landscapes and Wyevale Grounds Maintenance, based near Bristol,

Following the Wyevale acquisition, the group rebranded from the individual brands to The Landscape Group, presenting itself as a UK wide business.

The company created a national organisation with a new head office in Coventry and standard operating procedures including:

- Increasing the skill capital of its workforce, in particular the recruitment, retention and training of apprentices.
- Raising the quality of management at all levels, introducing a comprehensive management development programme for all management grades and an Accelerated Leadership Programme for exceptional talent.
- Improved business development including tendering processes.
- Initiatives to increase productivity and efficiency, mitigating client expenditure pressures, including an industry leading real time productivity data capture system.

Given the economic climate, management adopted a proactive strategy of helping public sector clients to reduce their budget and spending without detriment to its own profitability. This approach and the new business development process resulted in winning contracts throughout the UK, as far north as Aberdeen, and prestigious flagship work such as in the Olympic Park and Royal Parks.

The group also changed the revenue mix of the business, concentrating on long term maintenance contracts, with the visibility that provided, and reducing the level of “one off” construction projects. At exit the company had a forward order book of some £300 million.

The Exit

Elysian sold its interests in March 2015 to Idverde, the largest landscape construction and maintenance business in France.

Idverde had been considering a potential acquisition in the UK for some time, and concluded that The Landscape Group provided the strongest management team, the strongest financial performance and the best cultural fit for Idverde in the UK.

In 2015, the enlarged group represented the largest specialist landscaping and grounds maintenance business in Europe with 4000 staff and a turnover of more than €360 m.

The Landscape Group’s CEO, Nick Temple-Heald, and CFO, Doug Graham took up posts on the board of the ultimate holding company of the group (Armorica SA).