

Pop star gallops into polo resorts

DRUMMER Kenney Jones of The Small Faces is to team up with Matthew Lawrence, the entrepreneur, to open an international chain of polo resorts.

They are planning a series of luxury establishments in the US, the Middle East and Europe — all revolving round the sport.

"A lot of people have done this with golf clubs," Lawrence said. "Kenney and I want to do the same sort of thing with polo." They hope that their resorts will do for the sport what exclusive projects such as the Sandy Lane club in Barbados have done for golf.

Lawrence said that they were in talks for a site in West Palm Beach in Florida and were also looking at the possibility of developing a Californian resort at Santa Barbara. "The US is heavily into polo," he said.

They are also in discussions about land in one of the Gulf states, although Lawrence declined to say which state.

It is likely that the resorts will have a boutique hotel and spa in addition to a number of polo fields.

Jones brings a fair degree of expertise to the venture. He already owns Hurtwood Park polo club in Surrey, which

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could also be expanded, though any development would need to gain the approval of the local planning authority.

His business partner in the project, Lawrence, owns Amiri, a housebuilder specialising in developing upmarket villas in exclusive resorts in areas such as Sotogrande, on the Spanish south coast.

It is not clear how much it will cost to develop the resorts. Lawrence said he was in talks with various parties interested in investing in his Amiri business. Fresh investment from new shareholders would help to pay for the polo developments.

Lawrence believes that the sport could be a winner. He said: "There are far fewer people who play polo but, unlike golf, it appeals to everyone, whether they play or not."

He has not always been associated with such glamorous businesses. Lawrence, who now flies a Cessna Citation jet, made his first fortune by manufacturing toilet-roll holders, soap dispensers and other bathroom products.