

Architects open base in Siberia

RMJM, the Edinburgh-based architecture firm behind the Scottish parliament and the Falkirk Wheel, is to launch its third Russian base after picking up contracts as part of a regeneration drive in a forgotten area of Siberia, writes Jane Bradley.

Architects working from the new office in Vladivostok will design two \$250m (£150m) hotels for the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) summit being held in the city in 2012.

The base is also behind a plan to construct a casino in the region and an eco-resort on Russky Island, in the Sea of Japan, where the conference will be held.

Vladivostok is the capital of the Primorsky region in Siberia. The Russian government vowed to invest \$13 billion on improving the area, which was closed during the communist era because of its high-security naval base.

Dr Vladimir Kvint, the Russia chairman for RMJM, said the company had signed a "memorandum" with the Primorsky government about other potential projects.

"For many years this region did not have a lot of investment, or any projects," he said. "As host city for the Apec meetings, Vladivostok will be propelled on to the international stage. It's a real opportunity to put the city and the region back on the map."

Kvint, who is also the president of the International Academy of Emerging Markets, added: "With major long-term investment committed to the region, it is currently one of the few areas in Russia showing economic growth."

RMJM, which worked on the Holyrood parliament building with the Spanish architect Enric Miralles, has two other Russian offices — in Moscow and St Petersburg — with a further 14 worldwide. A total of 20 employees will work from the Vladivostok base in what will initially be a project office for the Apec events, but which RMJM hopes will become a permanent base.

