

Appendix C: Extract from Business Tourism Development and Promotion in Brent, London Tourism Company, March 2006

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

The following should not be seen as fully-formed recommendations but as suggestions and thoughts which could be further developed.

1.1 Overall approach

We suggest the adoption of a two-tiered approach to business tourism in Brent. At one level, LBB can take direct action to support local business tourism venues - from small scale venues to the larger facilities - through a number of facilitation initiatives.

At another level, LBB can provide strategic support for the on-going development of Wembley as an iconic, international facility. This could indirectly help other tourism businesses in the area.

Given that all the current business tourism venues are in the Wembley area, opportunities to spread the effects wider are also highlighted.

1.2 Supporting local business tourism venues

The council can offer some practical ways to help the smaller, local venues develop business tourism:

- *Provide a dedicated tourism 'voice for the Borough'*. He/she should ensure that tourism issues are on the agenda as well as overseeing any marketing and information provision activities. This is already happening albeit on an informal basis in the borough. The position of the Business Development Manager should be formalised in this regard and given the resources and authority to be such a 'voice'.
- *Enhance communication between the local authority and the private sector*. A formal channel for communication between the public and private sectors should be established. This could be through the existing group of tourism venues that already meet on an informal basis or through the Wembley Town Centre Partnership. There should be close links to the tourism officer identified above. This would encourage and help:
 - the establishment of a co-ordinated local business tourism strategy
 - businesses to understand the resource restrictions under which local authorities have to operate, particularly with regard to tourism
 - local authorities to understand the business needs of the private sector and how council decisions and actions can and do impact upon them
 - information sharing and data collection

The tourism officer should work with the venues to keep track of the size, performance and value of the sector in each area. Venues should feed relevant data to the officer on a regular basis - no of conferences / meetings, no of delegates, type of client (e.g. local or not local, corporate or association), length of meeting etc. Compiled data can then be used to monitor growth, make marketing / product development decisions and - most important - to emphasise the importance of the sector and justify adequate levels of support for it.

- *Promote all the venues of the Borough under the Wembley banner i.e. as a business tourism cluster.* The wider research undertaken for the LDA identified the low profile of most outer London business tourism venues and recommended defining 'clusters' that have more resonance with potential buyers. Using Wembley to promote Brent is much more likely to be effective than incorporating Wembley as part of a Brent brand. Wembley Stadium offers a particular focus or hook for marketing or editorial activity that can be exploited for all local venues.
- *Produce a comprehensive listings guide for the Borough.* LBB should produce a comprehensive listing of all business tourism venues in the borough, promoted as 'Destination Wembley'. The audit undertaken for the LDA research is a useful first step in achieving this. Information should include each facility's details, capacity and special features, as well as price, accessibility and quality. Once the information is gathered, the list should be circulated to local outlets such as TICs, local authority offices, chambers of commerce and local businesses as well as being put on the website. The list must be kept up-to-date.

Editorial material in the guide and on the website should focus on the cluster and emphasise the following aspects¹:

- Value for money i.e. that prices are cheaper than central London
- Good access – fast trains from central London, proximity to airports
- *Use the Local Strategic Partnership to promote business tourism:* The Local Strategic Partnership is made up of a family of partnerships. These include the private sector Employer Partnership and the Brent Community Network. Whilst the Partnership is not set up to be a promotional tool, it should be possible to distribute information about business tourism i.e. the above listing to its members
- *Create a dedicated business tourism web page.* A dedicated business tourism web page or web site should be constructed for the Wembley 'cluster'. The pages should be linked to Visit London and other venue finding websites and include:
 - Editorial overview of the cluster
 - Highlights of key venues
 - Up to date list of venues
 - Contact details for local tourism officer
 - Links to venue websites

¹ The LDA research identified that these were common misperceptions of the product in outer London.

The online presence doesn't need to be overcomplicated, but should be clear, easy to navigate and contain a good level of content appropriate to conference organisers' needs

- *Create a database of local conference / meeting room buyers:* Aside from the international and national markets that might be attracted to the major iconic facilities at Wembley, the majority of the market for business tourism venues in the area will be derived from local markets. The LDA- commissioned report into business tourism in South and West London has reinforced this finding.

LBB should generate an up-to-date, well maintained database of local conference and event buyers which can be used by local venues for targeted marketing activities and awareness-raising. This process should start with the identification of major local firms and then:

- Identify the person or persons responsible for venue bookings (this can involve a number of people in the larger companies including PAs, Marketing or HR managers, or a specific events officer)
- Provide the relevant person with information (e.g. venue listing)
- Organise familiarisation trips for them to look at key venues

Company listings are readily available in libraries but some prioritisation in terms of scale and nature of the company would be helpful. The Wembley Town Centre Partnership, the local Chambers of Commerce and the council's economic development department should be able to help with this

- *Conference / meeting room open day:* Given the geographical concentration of venues in the Wembley area, there is potential to hold a business tourism open day to which local businesses are encouraged to view the facilities on offer in the area. A visit to Wembley should encourage take-up
- *Create a delegate pack.* Material for inclusion in delegate packs should be put together for the Wembley cluster. Material could include destination information (local attractions, restaurants and places of interest as well as transport options) to entice delegates out of a conference centre or to return as a leisure visitor at a later date. Such information would also be useful when marketing the cluster to buyers.

Although the recently introduced Z card provides useful information for conference delegates, its small format means that it is likely to either fall out of a pack or not be noticed. To get around this, rather than produce another specific piece of print, consider glue-mounting the z guide on an A4 sheet. This sheet could contain a welcome to the borough and offer some information tailored to conference delegates

- *Devise and organise social excursions for delegates:* Many conference programmes now include social excursions to visitor attractions. LBB could act in a liaison capacity, contacting attractions such as Neasden Mosque to arrange tours or organise guided tours of the Asian Jewellery Quarter
- *Adopt a longer-term proactive approach to promotion.* Once the cluster is identified and materials produced, a proactive approach to publicising 'Wembley' further afield might be considered. If so, this might best be done via other agencies such as:

- Visit London
- British Association of Conference Destinations
- Venue finding agencies / websites
- Visit Britain

Visit London is currently enhancing its business tourism activity so there is now an opportunity for closer co-operation between local authorities and venues located outside the central tourist area. Current knowledge of outlying products within Visit London is very low and it is very important that local authorities (and individual venues) address this problem. Opportunities include:

- Ensure product information is included on Visit London database. (Establish template of required information with Visit London so that venues can submit information in the correct format)
- Organise familiarisation trips for Visit London officials to Wembley venues
- Gain links from Visit London business website to any local business tourism webpages
- *Encourage Wembley venues to become members of VL:* At present only the Stadium and Plaza Hotel are members of VL. Membership of VL for all Wembley venues would support the active promotion by VL of Wembley as a business tourism cluster
- *Support venues wanting to develop business tourism:* There are likely to be a range of buildings that would be suitable for use as meeting or conference venues but which are currently not used for this purpose (e.g. public buildings, community facilities, churches). LBB could:
 - Develop a PR campaign to encourage more venues to offer conference / meeting room facilities
 - Offer marketing support for any venue willing to open up their facilities (e.g. inclusion on business tourism web-pages)

1.3 Support Wembley; the Stadium, the Brand, the Place

Once it opens, Wembley Stadium will be one of the capital's leading conference venues and the iconic hook for the local business tourism cluster. Giving the venue appropriate support will help ensure further growth and investment by the venue. It will also encourage others with (business) tourism investment plans to see Brent or the Wembley Cluster as a good place to do business.

The Wembley brand is immensely strong but its associations are currently tied strongly to sport. As other leisure and tourism elements of the Wembley regeneration vision come on-stream, there is a need to communicate the wider 'Destination Wembley' vision.

The 'Destination Wembley' vision imagines the area around the Stadium becoming a leading retail, leisure and visitor destination. This will have

considerable positive effects, not just on business tourism but also the wider economy.

A number of LBB initiatives may be appropriate in this context:

- *Offer civic receptions:* Offering to host civic receptions with leading councillors and/or the Mayor can be seen as adding something special and can help sway decisions about the location of a conference
- *Support overseas market development:* Wembley's iconic brand means that there is real scope to develop international markets for conferences at Wembley. LBB should encourage Wembley to become a partner with Visit London and participate in overseas mission / overseas campaigns. The Council should provide a special welcome for any overseas conference visitors
- *Lobby for more hotel accommodation:* A key issue for Wembley Stadium is the limited availability of overnight accommodation. As well as being less than ideal for the Stadium, this is a missed business opportunity for the Borough. Although the proposed 5 star Hilton hotel will help, there is a need to ensure more is developed. The recent decision not to progress plans for a casino may leave a question mark over current demand. There is a need to work with the Wembley Marketing Manager and the Council's planning dept to prepare a hotel needs assessment and actively support any new proposals for hotel development
- *Lobby for other related development e.g:*
 - Securing major visitor and leisure attractions in the Wembley area
 - Further environmental improvements
 - Signage to help link Wembley with Wembley Town Centre
 - Visitor information in all new developments particularly new public spaces
- *Ensure that policy decisions made in Wembley maximise the potential for tourism in the borough.* Get tourism on the agenda in all relevant committees
- *Investigate the status of the Destination Wembley brand:* A couple of years ago, consultants were commissioned by the Wembley Task Force to develop a strategy for marketing the Wembley area. They developed the concept of Destination Wembley to be used as a consumer proposition. However it is unclear how the Destination Wembley concept has been developed as a tourism proposition. Indeed, it is not clear whether there is still a commitment to using it as the brand for Wembley. This should be clarified
- *Register/ purchase domains:* Even though it might not be in a position to do so now, LBB needs to ensure that if it does seek to promote itself online using a web address distinct from the council, it is able to use appropriate domain names (ie web addresses). Below we outline the current position and suggested actions with regard to a number of relevant domains:
 - *Visitbrent.com* is currently owned by Visit London. It is due to expire in August 2008. Consider buying the domain off VL
 - *Visitwembley.com* currently directs users to a commercial site Visit2EU.com. It might be difficult to attain this domain unless the

registration lapses. The uk extension co.uk is registered to a Wembley resident (Chirag Gir, 68 Scarle Road) until 15 May2008. There might be scope to contact Mr Gir to see if he would be willing to transfer the domain to the council

- *Destinationwembley.com* and the co.uk extension are both available. Moves should be made to purchase these domains

1.4 Maximise the Wembley effect for the good of Brent

Clearly, Brent benefits enormously from the direct economic impacts associated with delegates attending the Stadium's conference facilities. But there is also a need to look at how this iconic venue can be harnessed for maximum positive effect in terms of wider tourism development.

- *Facilitate dialogue between Wembley business tourism businesses and the wider tourism business community:* Management from Wembley business tourism venues already meet on an informal basis. Also, the Wembley Town Centre Partnership occasionally hosts 'Hospitality Networking Meetings'. Consider offering to facilitate, service and chair a borough-wide hospitality/tourism meeting. Given their large land holdings, a representative from Quintain Estates and Development plc should be invited to join the Forum
- *Encourage the development of hotels and visitor orientated attractions outside of Wembley:* If the benefits of Wembley are to be spread throughout the borough there is a need to encourage development that will help dispersal within the Borough. People will need compelling reasons to venture out from Wembley and specific action to creates these needs to be undertaken
- *Further develop the tourism pages for Brent but mirror content on a Destination Wembley website.* Much of the content on Brent's recently revamped tourism pages could be mirrored on a Destination Wembley website. (Again, using Wembley to promote Brent is much more likely to be effective than incorporating Wembley as part of a Brent brand). The content should focus on providing comprehensive visitor information on the Wembley area, but also have sections on what to see nearby (attractions, restaurants, Neasden mosque, Ealing Road Jewellery etc)
- *Website integration:* Seek to integrate key content from the Wembley Town Centre Partnership (WTCP) website (wembleytown.com) into the Destination Wembley website. The WTCP website contains some good content, but it would be sensible to replicate or integrate visitor orientated content within the proposed Destination Wembley website