



Tourism in Brent

A report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group

July 2007

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Recommendations

- 1. That the Council either redefine an existing post, create a new position or use a “hands –on” consultant, alone or in combination, to co-ordinate tourism efforts across the council sectors and with commercial and private sectors, for an initial period of 6 months.**
(See also “Tourism Appointee” page 14 and their “Objectives” page 15)
- 2. That no one directorate/ department or group of departments within the council be responsible for either the formal job spec or selection of the appointee.** (the temptation to bias in this overall encompassing role needs to be positively guarded against)
- 3. That the appointee will have *proven* complex project, integration and programme management experience with hands on experience of PERT** (Project Evaluation and Review Techniques), **related financial and programme control techniques and detailed work package / milestone systems.**
- 4. That the council work with local businesses and partners to develop promotion material around themes, for example working with restaurants to develop a full range of marketing materials for “eating out within Brent”.**
- 5. That a Brand and associated logo is developed for use by Brent services and all tourism related products and agencies with a recognised logo that can be included on other relevant stakeholder promotions.**

Tourism in Brent

Purpose of the Review

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked this task group to investigate the role that the council plays in providing tourism services in the London Borough of Brent and consider how it can be improved.

Historical Background.

The London Borough of Brent can rightly be described as a prime area for tourism; it is home to the famous Wembley Stadium and has a vast array of restaurants and award winning parks. Wembley is also undergoing a multi million pound regeneration programme which will transform the area over the next ten years. However the council does not have a dedicated tourism resource to manage the flow of visitors to the borough..

Brent council has been considering tourism provision over a number of years. The task group were presented with previous reports from the London Development Agency¹, as well as an internal discussion paper². Key points to come out of both of these reports were that more investment needs to be made into tourism provision in the borough and as a result the council is missing out on opportunities to maximise the benefits of tourism. These reports have helped to inform this work and have contributed to the final recommendations.

The task group were mindful of the Wembley development which will impact upon the tourism in the borough over the next ten years. The recommendations within this review are for immediate implementation.

Future.

A further review by the Tourism Task Group will be required over the next year to ensure that this work is still fit for purpose and is “on track”.

Definition - What do we mean by tourism?

Tourism refers to “people travelling to a destination for a variety of temporary purposes.” It is more than people taking holidays This relates to business, conferences, visiting friends and family, shopping and leisure. ³

It is also important to include within any such definition, that tourism needs to be divided into two basic categories; “Internal” and “external” to Brent; visitors originating from within and from outside Brent.

A more encompassing name for tourism is the visitor economy. This covers almost every aspect of the economy and community – from the typical tourism sectors such as the hotels and attractions to hard infrastructure, the environment, jobs and training.

¹ Brent Tourism Review, London Development Agency, March 2006, Brent Tourism Review – Final Report March 2005.

² The Visitor Economy – the role of Brent, Discussion Paper , April 2005

³ The Role of Local Authorities in Tourism, A position statement from the Local Government Association

Why do local authorities deliver tourism services?

Currently, twenty two of the thirty three London Boroughs employ tourism officers. Although local authorities do not have a statutory responsibility to provide this service, many councils find it beneficial to play a lead role as drawing in visitors from outside the borough which ***can provide a major boost to the local economy through increased custom for businesses and providing local jobs.***

Councils who participate in tourism take a strategic overview of the local area, co-ordinating with other tourism partners to protect the interests of residents and implement the local vision. Also, a co-ordinated well maintained local area that promotes its best features can enhance civic pride and social / community well being.

There are also potential disadvantages to tourism that need to be managed. An influx of visitors can lead to additional pressure on the local environment and transport infrastructure as well as lead to discontent among local residents.

The Task Group Methodology

The task group were thorough in their investigation and conducted discussions with internal and external stakeholders. Members were keen to explore how tourism related services are delivered throughout the council. The task group were particularly keen to understand:

- Role of service areas in attracting visitors both internal and external
- Possibility of tourism providing additional income generation for the council,
- Tourism and local employment
- Partnership working to deliver tourism objectives

The task group met with:

Business Development Manager
Wembley Marketing and Communications Manager
Assistant Director, Regeneration
Assistant Director, Arts and Learning
Director of Planning
Tourism Manager for West London, London Development Agency.
The Wembley Town Centre Manager
The Harlesden Town Centre Manager

The task group also contacted service areas to request a written briefing on how tourism services are provided in their section, the partners that they work with and if funding is available what particular projects would be carried out. Written briefings were received from:

Transport
Arts and Learning
Regeneration
The two town centre managers,

The chairman also spoke to Director of Finance & Corporate Resources and Parks personnel, Superintendent, open spaces City of London.

It is recognised that a fuller briefing from both Brent Parks and City of London Open Spaces should be conducted.

At the beginning of the project the Chair of the task group wrote to neighbouring authorities to request information about how they provide tourism services across the council. Responses were received from:

LB Ealing

LB Hillingdon

LB Hammersmith and Fulham

A survey was conducted of all Brent councillors asking them to outline the key attractions in their ward and what could be done to boost tourism in their area. While the response to the survey was low, it did provide very useful information on the areas that are valued by residents but may not have been recognised as a designated area for tourism in Brent. Some Members also responded informally to the task group chair. Further information on the survey can be found at **Appendix A**

Context

The UK and London context

Strategic responsibility for tourism in the UK rests with the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). The main vision for tourism is set out in the document "Tomorrows Tourism Today"⁴. It highlights that although the UK tourism industry has an annual turnover of £76million making it the 7th highest tourism earner in the world, there is still work to do to ensure that quality and high standards are consistent across the country, there is also a need to develop skills and marketing within the sector.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport sees the local authority role as:

"...performing a vital function in supporting the tourism industry - not least because of their statutory duties and their wider responsibilities for local infrastructure, economic development and sense of place. Local authorities are well placed to perform the essential function of co-ordinating all aspects of tourism at a local level, working in partnership with businesses and other interests, including the Regional Development Agencies and their delivery partners."⁵

The Greater London Authority Act 1999 gave the Mayor strategic responsibility for the promotion and development of tourism within London which in turn has been delegated to the London Development Agency, (LDA) one of the nine regional development agencies in England set up to promote business and job growth in their area. Visit London is responsible for the marketing and promotion of London and is funded by the LDA.

⁴ Tomorrows Tourism Today, Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2004

⁵ Tomorrows Tourism Today, Department for Culture Media and Sport. 2004

London is without a doubt the magnet for both domestic and overseas visitors to the UK attracting 15.2m visitors per year. This in turn generated £7.5 billion in visitor spending in 2005.⁶

The Mayor of London's ten year tourism vision calls for the benefits of tourism to be spread throughout the city. This means dispersing the visitors beyond the established attractions and accommodation of central London to other parts of the capital. To this end the LDA have employed a tourism officer for each of the sub regions of London.

The West London Sub- Region

The west London LDA sub region includes Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Hounslow. Currently only two of the six West London boroughs have a tourism officer.

The West London region generates £2 billion every year to the visitor economy, with £229 million of income generated by visitors to the new National Stadium at Wembley⁷. The LDA points to Wembley Stadium as one of the key drivers for the sub region. The task group soon became aware that other boroughs in West London recognise the benefits of the stadium and are using it as a lever to draw visitors to their area.

In terms of developing the visitor economy, the West London Sub region as a whole needs to improve its signage and its information for visitors. It also faces competition from the major attractions within Central London and the growing business tourism sector in East London.

A report by the Greater London Assembly⁸ highlights that despite the Mayors dispersal policy Central London still benefits disproportionately from Visit London campaigns. This means that much of Visit London's resources and publicity focus on London's major iconic attractions. Although Visit London are working to redress this balance, discussions with the Tourism Development Manager for West London highlighted the need for a central point of contact within the council to co-ordinate tourism across the borough and link in with Visit London promotions.

Brent - what we have done already

The corporate strategy 2006-2010 sets plans to develop a tourism strategy

"We will develop a programme of activities to ensure local people benefit from the 2012 Olympics and a tourism strategy that balances economic needs with those of local residents."

The approved Brent Core Strategy Preferred Options contained within the Local Development Framework (LDF) tranche of documents also promotes Leisure and Tourism and lays out the policy for financial contributions towards their promotion.

⁶ Greater London Authority Press Release 23/04/04 number 246

⁷ London Tourism: by numbers. London Bulletin July /August 2006: London Councils

⁸ Tourism in Outer London, London Assembly Scrutiny Report, December 2006.

At present there is nothing of note in place to make the development of a tourism strategy a reality.

The task group would like to commend the work of officers across the council who have made valuable contributions to tourism related activity in the borough. However it soon became apparent that there is not a coherent approach to developing the visitor economy within the council. Members found that there is neither a single point of contact nor co-ordination of this work; it is conducted and provided in a piecemeal fashion by almost independent groups with no clear overall vision for what the visitor economy in Brent consists of and how it should be delivered.

Much of the work is conducted by the Business Development Manager, based in the Film Office within the Communications Unit. Her main role is to manage the Brent Film Office. She has also made a contribution to providing information for visitors to the borough having noticed that it is not taking place elsewhere. The Business Development Manager acts as the main point of contact in liaising with neighbouring councils' tourism officers and with partner organisations such as the London Development Agency and Visit London. She has also recently revamped the Visit Brent area of the website. During discussions it was made clear that work on tourism related activity is carried out in addition to all the duties of her substantive post. This has meant that there has been neither the time nor the resource to give the required level of attention to this work.

The regeneration team have taken the lead to ensure that local people benefit from employment opportunities provided by the visitor economy. The Councils award winning employment initiative Brent in 2 Work has developed links with Delaware catering who provide hospitality services to Wembley Stadium. Through training initiatives and interview support, local residents benefit from the stadium's employment opportunities. The Assistant Director for Regeneration reported that so far at least 75 local people have been placed in employment.

Local regeneration is a catalyst for boosting the visitor economy by attracting visitors, jobs and new businesses to the area. The new Wembley Development, which is set for completion in 2010 will be a spring board for the regeneration of the whole borough. The finished product will be an impressive facility including a retail and leisure complex. The regeneration and culture teams are working with the developers to secure the retail offer within the area. The Wembley Marketing and Communications Manager is responsible for marketing Wembley and works closely with Park Royal and the West London Alliance. Arena Square, is being managed separately by Wembley London Limited although the council will host a programme of events including public performances. Plans are also being developed for a Museum which will feature Music and Sport in line with the main events held at Wembley Stadium.

Discussions with Prafula Shah, Wembley Marketing and Communications Manager highlighted that the council would benefit from liaising with Quintain, the Wembley developers to work with their marketing department on co-ordinating joint promotions.

When considering the arts, cultural and learning activities in the borough, the task group found that a wide range of initiatives take place, Some of the main attractions include the new Brent museum which has exceeded its visitor targets in the first quarter, Willesden library and sports centre. Events run by the library also attract visitors from within the borough and surrounding areas.

The Assistant Director for Arts and Learning particularly pointed to the councils festivals programme as an event that could, with more resource and promotion, be a successful way of attracting more external visitors to Brent. Diwali and St Patrick's Day particularly are popular events which celebrate the diversity within the borough. Targeted tourism campaigns around sports and art facilities could also support efforts to meet targets set out by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Planning policy makes an important contribution to the visitor economy through enhancement of the public realm and safeguarding the attractiveness of the local area, all new developments are required to accord with the councils planning vision for the area. The work is underpinned by a host of policy documents, flowing from the sub regional to the local level. The recently agreed Local Development Framework document will also have important implications for tourism as it specifies that section 106 monies can be used for tourism purposes where appropriate.

Brent's excellent transport links to central London was raised during many discussions with the task group. It was thought that this is a good selling point to attract visitors who want to avoid the high accommodation costs in Central London. The task group also received a briefing from the transport team which highlighted that the department carries out a range of initiatives which support tourism such as the use of the brown/white tourism signage where appropriate, the dissemination of public transport information and working with both the planning department within the council and Transport for London on signage and visitor management.

Lively and vibrant town centres are important for the visitor economy. Brent has four, designated town centre managers (TCM) based in Wembley, Willesden, Harlesden and Kilburn. The work of the TCM is influenced by a range of policy documents including: Local Development Framework, Economic Development Strategy and Public Realm Strategy a new Town centre strategy is due out at end of the year 2007.

In Brent, town centres have been in decline over a number of years. This has in part been caused by the decline of the retail offer and competition from White City and Brent Cross Shopping Centres. One of the activities of TCM is to market and promote their local centres. Work of the Wembley Town Centre Manager includes; supporting the Wembley Town website, liaising with hotels to include Wembley destinations in their local coach tours, working with the LDA on including Brent Town Centres within visit London promotions.

The task group were aware that a new overview and scrutiny review of Town Centre Regeneration is due to commence shortly. This will help to put forward suggestions for the redefinition of our town centres, also the outcomes of this review should be useful if considering new ways to promote town centres.

Town centre managers have recently secured £50k over two years from the LDA's 'enhanced project' pot to improve the local area. Some of the money will be used to improve the shop fronts on Wembley High Road.

However TCM feel that if more resources were available to improve local signage and facilities for tourists and a dedicated tourism officer were in place it would improve their ability to raise the profile of the town centres within Brent. An example was given of LB

Ealing who had had invested in the streetscene in the Southall area and it has now become a recognised tourism destination.

Tourism and the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Brent needs to consider the opportunities of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the context of tourism. The Games are expected to provide a major boost to the British tourism Industry and attract 500,000 more visitors to the UK

There is no denying that overseas visitors are likely to head to central London as their location of choice but cheaper accommodation and proximity to the centre does make Brent attractive for potential visitors. Brent is also hosting the women's and men's quarter, semi and final football events.

However it is the legacy of the Games that will provide the greatest impact for tourism. Post 2012, after the UK has been showcased over four weeks it could become a location of choice for international business events. This was certainly the case after the Olympic Games were held in Sydney, Australia in 2000, they experienced an increase in Business tourism thereafter and international visitors increasing by 78%.⁹

The Council has established a cross department 2012 steering group to develop a programme of activities for residents including a pilot volunteering programme and cultural activities. However the task group has found that the council will need to do more to develop the visit economy as a whole if we are to truly maximise the opportunities of 2012.

Task group findings and recommendations

Brent Attractions

Rather than focus on the most obvious attractions in Brent, the task group was keen to adopt a bottom up approach and seek views based upon local intelligence on what were popular locations for visits among residents hence the councillor survey on attractions in Brent was one of the first activities of the task group.

The results of the councillor survey on tourism and previous work carried out by the Business Development Manager as well as prior knowledge of the task group members themselves highlighted that there are a wealth of attractions that exist within Brent. As well as the internationally renowned Wembley stadium, Brent has award winning parks, a cluster of high quality Portuguese restaurants in Harlesden, which are often overshadowed by the areas image as a crime hotspot.

There was a unanimous view among the groups that the task group spoke to that it would be beneficial to organise the main attractions in Brent around **themes**. This would make it easier to link with other campaigns such as those run by visit London who tend to adopt a thematic approach. The Assistant Director for Regeneration pointed out that Brent is not recognised as a brand and once we are clear about what we want to market we can focus on themes that highlight our strengths such as the range of foods

⁹ Getting on Track: How local authorities can maximise the benefits of London 2012: Local Government Association, March 2006.

available in the borough. An initial list of Brent attractions organised by suggested themes is attached at **Appendix B**.

Do we need a Tourism Officer?

One of the main considerations for the task group has been to determine if a dedicated tourism officer is needed to develop the visitor economy in Brent or if this work can be carried out in some other way either by better co-ordination of existing resources or perhaps taking forward the LDA suggestion of a joint West London tourism officer¹⁰

The task group received mixed views from officers on whether a dedicated tourism resource is needed. Some officers were of the view that we need an officer as a matter of urgency to co-ordinate the offer and forge links with tourism partners. The Business Development Manager pointed out that services across the council are currently delivered in a piece-meal fashion with no department taking a positive lead or direction. This means that any benefits to local people and the community at large are incidental. Brent is not able to take advantage of opportunities to work with neighbouring boroughs and develop partnerships to grow this area. There is also a significant market for friends and family visitors to the borough that is currently not being targeted. Many visitors will attend Wembley Stadium over the coming year but most are not aware of what the borough has to offer and are more likely to socialise and spend their cash in central London.

This view is also shared by the LDA who prepared a briefing on the benefits of a tourism officer for Brent pointing out that:

- Examples across London, including West London boroughs, show that tourism officers are cost effective in terms of the benefit they produce for the Council, local people and local businesses. Exact cost benefits would need to be determined by Brent Council taking into account key objectives and specified work plans for tourism activities.
- Any tourism budget could also seek match funding from partnerships and private enterprises to carry out activities for joint benefit.
- Without financial commitment to tourism, Brent will find it difficult to compete with other London boroughs, such as those in East London and White City which show dramatic growth as destinations. A tourism officer could help to take full advantage of the range of opportunities presented such as by the West London Tourism Executive (through the London Development Agency), Visit London and the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012.

The Assistant Director of Regeneration was far more sceptical about the long term benefits of a dedicated tourism officer. While there was recognition that there is a short term need, it was felt that in the long term tourism would not yield great returns for the borough; Brent cannot compete with the huge tourism offer in central London and with

¹⁰ Brent Tourism Review – Final Report March 2006, argues for the four of the West London Boroughs to join together to appoint a tourism which will have the benefit of sharing the costs.

the decline of our town centres, the borough is also losing out to the other major shopping centres in White City and Brent Cross. It was stated that tourism will never be a great income generator for the council; it is also an area that is vulnerable to funding cuts and its achievements are difficult to measure. The Wembley project will be largely self sustaining and additional benefits for the local economy will be minimal. It was suggested that the council would benefit from directly putting additional resource into other growth areas such as the media and film industries.

After giving this careful consideration, the task group feel that there is a clear need to co-ordinate Brent's visitor economy to maximise existing resources and provide strategic direction for the work that is already taking place. The Council will also benefit from working with local partners to support and promote tourism. For example a report by the LDA highlighted that a feature in a Visit London campaign can be worth up to £450, 000 worth of coverage¹¹.

The Tourism Appointee

A dedicated person, with **proven** complex project, integration and programme management experience, should be identified to play a central role in co-ordinating across the council and externally to develop a tourism strategy and action plan, this post should be for 6 months in the first instance.. Once the themes for the attractions in Brent have been agreed, the appointee will need to work with Visit London and other marketing organisations including the Quintain development to promote Brent. As this is a short term post the appointee will work with service areas to clarify their role and contribution to tourism to ensure that this work is embedded within the council.

Wembley development is without a doubt a catalyst for tourism regeneration within the borough. This is a long term project with completion of the full retail and leisure offer set for around 2010. Both the Business Development Manager and the Wembley Marketing and Communications Manager recognised the need to try and disperse visitors around the borough and to encourage those visitors who come to Brent to come back and experience other attractions. This must be a clear aspiration within any Brent Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan.

Clear and branded literature also needs to be distributed to local hotels and relevant outlets across London to promote Brent's conference facilities, with opportunities sought to market on behalf of businesses for a fee.

The post will need to be of a sufficiently high level to work strategically across the council to influence senior management and implement the tourism strategy.

The appointee should also work closely with officers in service areas to implement good practice such as the case study outlined below.

Case Study West London - Hammersmith & Fulham

The Visitor Development Officer at Hammersmith & Fulham Council developed a series of 'Go West' cultural walking tours (film, Middle Eastern & Polish) to

¹¹ A Tourism Officer for Brent, LDA, May 2007

encourage locals to explore their neighbourhood and to highlight the diversity of local cultures.

[http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Images/Hammersmith and Fulham Go west calendar 2007_tcm21-60469.pdf](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Images/Hammersmith_and_Fulham_Go_west_calendar_2007_tcm21-60469.pdf)

These walks are always oversubscribed and recently won the Visit London Silver Award 2006 for Best London Tour – competing against the likes of the London Big Bus Tours in central London. These tours are run by accredited Blue Badge Guides and include visits to local businesses including food shops and restaurants. Marketing and promotion efforts led to Time Out running a 4page spread on the tours, helping to create a return on investment of 100:1.

This was deemed to be a cost effective exercise, not only due to the press coverage, but because it helped to support local businesses, engage local people, raise their awareness of the local area and contribute towards the council's diversity agenda in a tangible manner.

Recommendations

- **That the Council either redefine an existing post, create a new position or use a “hands –on” consultant, alone or in combination, to co-ordinate tourism efforts across the council sectors and with commercial and private sectors.**
- **That no one directorate/ department or group of departments within the council be responsible for either the formal job spec or selection of the appointee.** (the temptation to bias in this overall encompassing role needs to be positively guarded against)
- **That appointee will have *proven* complex project, integration and programme management experience**

Objectives should, at least be to:-

- **Produce a detailed “cost effective” analysis of all Council involvement in Tourism related work over the past year broken down by department and individuals.**
- **Complete the development and production of a detailed costed and time lined programmed tourism strategy and networked plan (incl. a cascading workpackage/ sub task/ major task/ task area plan).**
- **Produce a “source of funding plan”; this will be linked into the networked plan above.**
- **Begin the strategy implementation, measured against costed milestone objectives and plans above**
- **Develop initiatives that encourage Wembley / Wembley Stadium visitors to visit other attractions within our borough**
- **Develop the council's “business tourism” product and brand**
- **All the recommendations in this report should be implemented by the new post.**

- **Market attractions in Brent around themes such as sport and entertainment, eating out, open spaces, religion and architecture**
- **Use our numerous cultural festivals to further attract residents from surrounding areas.**
- **Work closely with our major developers e.g. Wembley Stadium plc, Quintain, to co-ordinate marketing strategies between for example Wembley Stadium and surrounds and other attractions in Brent**
-

Business Tourism

The task group found that there was a consensus view amongst officers on the need to develop our business tourism product. This was cited as growth area with great potential for further development, not only because of the opportunities created by the opening of Wembley Stadium but also because to maximise the opportunities within the existing hotel sector. Brent has the third highest concentration of hotels in London after central London and Heathrow. These are all located in the Wembley area and provide a great opportunity to brand and promote the offer.

A Local Area Tourism Impact Model produced by the LDA found that in Brent:

- Spending by overseas visitors is the largest source of tourism income for the borough.
- The average length of stay for both overseas visitors and domestic visitors to Brent is longer than for those to London as a whole.
- Tourism in Brent was worth £59.8million in 2004 with overseas visitors contributing 60% of this total.¹²

The council is currently not involved in business tourism support. Hotels do tours to attractions outside of the borough. The vast array of restaurants and ethnic clothes shops at Ealing Road are not marketed. The only information on attractions in the borough is the fold out leaflet produced by the Brent Film Office. Town Centre Managers are seeking to engage with hotels but are frustrated by the absence of information leaflets, which would usually be displayed in hotel lobbies on the attractions in the borough and the lack of co-ordination of tourism in Brent generally.

A marketing surgery commissioned by Visit London and London Councils¹³ to consider the prospects for business tourism in Brent recommends that Brent should focus its resources on developing support and promoting business and conference facilities.

Brent has a total of six conference facilities offering a total capacity for 15,000 delegates. This ranks us as a small player in terms of numbers of business venues London wide but a leading player in terms of capacity. Brent has 29% of the capacity for the South

¹² Evidence from the Local Area Tourism Impact Model, LB Brent, LDA, 2006

¹³ Business Tourism Development and Promotion in Brent, Marketing Surgery Report, Tourism Company. 2006.

and West London sub regions, making it the leading borough in this regard, with Hammersmith and Fulham on 17% and Richmond on 12%.

The West London sub region has an 8% share of London's business tourism market. This places it in third place behind East London 17% and Central London 68%. Brent currently has 7.3% of the tourism market in West London. This means that West London is not currently a major player in terms of Business Tourism but the new Wembley stadium will provide a much needed boost to the area and provides an opportunity for Brent to capitalise on the benefits of Wembley and increase its share of the business tourism market.

Wembley stadium is one of only seven venues in West London that can cater for more than 1000 delegates and just one of three that can host a conference of over 2000+ delegates. Looking across London there are only eleven venues that can cope with 1000+ theatre style and six that can cope with 2000+. ¹⁴

Business tourism in Brent could also benefit from future developments for the area, the regeneration of Wembley includes plans to build a new 5 star hotel.

The report has devised some suggested options for improving Brent's tourism product while recognising likely resource constraints, many of the recommendations are around information provision. Recommendations include; tailored information packs wider distribution of material, including simple and practical steps as producing a comprehensive listings guide for the borough. A full list of suggestions is attached at **Appendix C**

The case study below highlights the approach of Tower Hamlets in working with local businesses.

Case Study East London – Tower Hamlets

The Essential Venue Guide for London Eastside: This guide is managed by the Tower Hamlets tourism team and contains around 60 venues available for conferences, banquets, exhibitions and other events. Entry into the guide is paid for with enquirers directed to the venues rather than being handled by a conference desk or convention bureau.

In 2005, the guide was awarded the Meeting Industry and Marketing Awards' top prize for best brochure (venues section). On-line, there is a downloadable pdf of the brochure contained in the venues section of the Discover Tower Hamlets web-pages and also on the Council's business support section of the website. Also on the Discover pages is text from the guide, split into various capacity groupings (e.g. 10-100, 100-250 etc)

Tower Hamlets views this activity very much as business support and essential in supporting the growth of the local visitor economy.

¹⁴ Business Tourism Development and Promotion in Brent, Marketing Surgery Report, Tourism Company. 2006.

Recommendations

That the council work with local businesses and partners to develop promotion material around themes, for example working with restaurants to develop leaflets on eating out within Brent.

Information provision

Providing current, relevant information is essential to developing Brent's visitor economy. This information will assist visitors, local people and businesses on the facilities within the borough. In recognising the need for information for visitors, and the gap in provision the Business Development Manager produced a booklet which is available in local libraries and distributed to hotels and has updated the tourism section of the Brent website although this work has been good, the task group has found that on the whole information for visitors to Brent is wholly inadequate. This omission is a missed opportunity for the borough.

Brent would do well to draw upon the good practice of authorities like Birmingham City Council which has beacon status for sustainable tourism and has produced branded literature for target audiences. This view is also shared by the Assistant Director for Arts and Learning who during discussions with the task group highlighted the need for a package of information for visitors to be developed.

Consideration also needs to be given to other information outlets. Many local authorities are now providing street level iPlus terminals. As well as community information they offer journey planners, local maps and can be linked to call centres and emergency services. There is an existing network of these types of terminals in 17 London Boroughs. It must however be noted that they can be expensive and vulnerable to vandalism.¹⁵

The new Wembley Complex will include a Tourist Information Centres are seen as the lifeblood of the local visitor economy, providing a central point of contact for information and provides easy signposting for the visitor. The council needs to tap into this facility and ensure that it contains information about attractions across the borough.

Developing our Brand

For many years the council has been grappling with developing a brand name which is both recognisable to residents and the outside world. The name Wembley is a brand in its own right and already has UK and international recognition, though it is linked to particular sports and music.

This existing appeal needs to be utilised and widened. Residents who live in other parts of the borough are more likely to identify with Brent as their local area. To those living outside the borough the location of Brent is largely unknown.

The task group felt that continual re-branding of the borough is likely to lead to confusion among local residents and the outside world alike. Both the Assistant Directors for Regeneration and Arts and Learning felt that marketing the borough around themes

¹⁵ A tourism officer for Brent, LDA briefing May 2007

would be beneficial. The task group were informed about some work that had taken place in Harlesden to promote the area and shed its image of the capital of gun crime.

“Brent the Home of Wembley” was the preferred choice as the overarching brand for the borough. Local areas could also develop their own “brand” such as the ‘love Harlesden’ promotion. Any officer who is given responsibility for tourism will be required to conduct a piece of work developing a brand name and logo for Brent.

Recommendation

- **That a Brand is developed for use by Brent services and all tourism related products and agencies with a recognised logo that can be included on other relevant stakeholder promotions.**

Future tourism sources of funding

Given the commercial nature of the visitor economy the task group sought to identify potential sources of funding which could make tourism services financially self sustaining and perhaps draw in additional monies to the borough. In the brevity of time that the task group had to complete its work members were able to identify the following possible funding sources;

- Planning contributions from relevant developments
- Seek funding from Quintain for joint tourism work
- The council providing a saleable conference marketing role.
- Council providing a theme and activity organising service to Brent stakeholders and for “to be Tourist” groups / customers on a commercial “for profit” basis.
- Sponsorship money for joint branded literature

Conclusion

This is a critical time for the council to make decisions about how the visitor economy should be developed in the borough, not only to meet the commitment set out in the Corporate Strategy but also to maximise the benefits from the new Wembley Development and position Brent for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games; and to make a real positive contribution to Brent council finances!