

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny</b>  <b>4<sup>th</sup> December 2019</b>
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</b>
<b>TOURISM IN BRENT</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non key decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Matt Dibben Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise 02089371815 <a href="mailto:Matthew.dibben@brent.gov.uk">Matthew.dibben@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Response to the key lines of enquiry proposed by the Scrutiny Committee, to consider Brent's approach to tourism.
- 1.2 To set out the context of tourism in Brent; key assets, current activity, and opportunities.

## 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 For comment.

## 3.0 Background / Detail

- 3.1 Brent is a borough rich with tourist attractions and cultural assets. This includes a number of key attractions, as well as the appeal of town centres across Brent that represents an array of music, food, drink and clothing that is representative of the diverse community of the borough. The approach to tourism needs to maximise

benefits of key attractions, whilst ensuring it can benefit the borough as a whole, including its residents and businesses.

- 3.2 Some assets in Brent have an international appeal such as the stadium and Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Temple, as well as Wembley Park having a hotel cluster that can draw visitors from the around the world to stay in the area. Other areas of the borough, such as the town centres, parks and associated attractions, are likely to have a regional rather than national or international reach.

### **Key Lines of Enquiry**

- 3.3 The report will respond to each of Scrutiny's key lines of enquiry.

#### *Q1: Why do we need a new Strategy?*

- 3.4 Brent does not have a recently developed Tourism strategy, the latest edition being from 2007. However, a number of programmes and strategies have been developed that set the context and an ambitious approach for Brent. It is recognised that tourism makes an important contribution to the local (and wider) economy; it is therefore important to ensure that approaches to supporting tourism across the Borough are aligned.
- 3.5 The London Borough of Culture 2020 invests in cultural activity and promotion of the borough, which will put Brent on a wider stage for the coming year. The programme includes large scale events such as the Thorough Fair street party in Kilburn, No Bass Like Home weekender in Harlesden, as well as a music event to celebrate bass culture that will take place at Wembley Arena. The programme also includes a culture fund of £500k that enables local communities to take forward cultural initiatives. LBOC will be promoted widely by the borough and support by the Greater London Authority (GLA).
- 3.6 Brent has recently developed an Inclusive Growth Strategy (IGS), due to be taken to Full Council for a decision in November 2019. This outlines the cultural context and evidence base of Brent as well as trends that could affect tourism and culture into the future.
- 3.7 The IGS outlines that London is the 3rd most visited city in the world. Tourism accounts for 11.6% of London's GDP and 1 in 7 jobs. International visitors contributed £13bn across London's economy in 2017, this is equivalent to 3% of London's Economy.
- 3.8 Visitor numbers to London are projected to grow over the next 8 years, which is likely to lead to an increased demand for cultural offerings. By 2025, London is expected to reach 40.4 million visitors, up from 31.2 million visitors in 2016<sup>1</sup>. While most visitors to London currently stay in Zone 1 there is evidence of a growing appetite for local offers. Both trends provide an opportunity for Outer London boroughs to absorb some of the growing demand for an authentic cultural experience.

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<sup>1</sup> London & Partners (2017) A Tourism Vision for London

- 3.9 The IGS reviews the evidence and recognises the growth in visitor numbers, economic importance of tourism to London, and opportunity for Outer London to benefit from tourism, including demand for authentic local cultural experiences.
- 3.10 The overarching IGS policy response is that to promote tourism in Brent relevant partners should work together to formulate a strategic vision for tourism in the borough.

Short term objectives:

- Promote places to visit and attractions in the borough through quality marketing collateral, to be disseminated through local and London wide networks and media.
- Make the most of the footfall on event days in Wembley.

Medium term objectives:

- Collect and update data about the tourism offer and consumption in the borough.
- Make Brent a place that people want to visit.

- 3.11 Initiatives proposed to realise these short and medium term objectives include:

Produce and promote a Tourism Strategy for Brent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulating a clear vision for tourism in Brent will have economic benefits, and a tourism strategy could build on the borough's unique local brands and aim to increase dwell time and spend.</li> <li>• Brent's award of the London Borough of Culture 2020 has prompted popular websites to highlight places to visit in the borough. The London Borough of Culture 2020 brand and publicity should be used as a launch pad to create and advertise a comprehensive tourism offer. Neighbourhoods with unique selling points should be identified and promoted, food and dining experiences improved, and festivals and street art celebrated and increased.</li> <li>• A tourism strategy should include a local survey to collect up to date information on tourism patterns.</li> </ul>
Identify unique aspects of local areas, marketing them as 'Local Offers' and through wider place-promotion materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Tours visiting key local attractions in Brent could be run in partnership with the Council, Schools and community organisations. Tours could be focused and run by local people and grounded in their local knowledge, for example older volunteers could be engaged to run tours or they could be delivered in partnership with schools.</li> </ul>
Improve public realm around key	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public realm around key tourist attractions and gateway locations and transport nodes needs to be improved,</li> </ul>

tourist attractions and gateway locations.	including upgraded physical and better leisure offers. Signposting should be rationalised and provide clear direction to and accessible information about attractions and places of interest.
Better capture and retain Wembley event footfall and spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with regulatory and enforcement partners (police, highways and licensing) to adopt a fresh approach to pre and post-event activity. The new approach would recognise and aim to maximise the economic and social benefits of footfall in the area by allowing people to spend time using the food, drink, leisure and shopping facilities surrounding the Stadium and Arena.</li> </ul>

### 3.12 Good Practice Examples from the IGS: *Local Tours - Taste of Tooting Tour*

As members of the Tooting Town Centre Partnership, Wandsworth Council support local organisers of tours which introduce people to the area. Each tour is different but stops may include a producer of local organic gin, a Pilipino sari shop, a walk through the local markets and a forty-year old grocery shop selling vegetables from around the world.

In Brent a tour could be developed for key attractions including temples, public art, and other sites of interest such as Ace Café, and ultimately Wembley Park.

3.13 The emerging Brent Local Plan recognises the opportunities to grow tourism and visitor attractions in the borough. The borough's rich culture and diversity of its people have evolved into a number of distinctive places and neighbourhoods which give Brent its unique character. Each of these places and neighbourhoods have the potential of creating conditions suitable for economic growth including tourism.

3.14 The Local Plan emphasises the potential for significant tourism and evening economy uses in Wembley in conjunction with the stadium, SSE arena, London Designer Outlet (LDO), Boxpark and Troubadour theatre. In addition, it recognises the importance of the borough's town centres and other growth areas as areas that can promote a diverse range of uses including tourist attractions and cultural activities making Brent a tourist destination in its own right.

*Q 2: What are the key tourist attractions (assets) in Brent?*

3.15 A map of Brent's cultural and tourist attractions has been created, see Appendix 1.

3.16 The following list of the key attractions has been compiled that will be important for ongoing promotional activity.

#### **Event destinations:**

- Wembley Stadium
- Wembley Arena

## **Arts, culture and heritage:**

- The Kiln Theatre, Kilburn
- Troubadour Theatre (meanwhile), Wembley Park
- Lexi Cinema
- Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Neasden
- Shri Vallabh Nidhi Mandir, Ealing Road
- Shree Swaminarayan Mandir temple, Kingsbury
- Brent Museum and Archive, Willesden
- Gaumont State, Kilburn
- Churchill's Bunker, Neasden
- Metro Land (Brent contains some of the best Holden Stations)
- Blue Plaques
- Public art – murals and street art (e.g. Kilburn, Willesden, Church End, Ealing Road)
- It should also be noted that heritage and culture can be seen in Brent's town centres through the food, drink, music, and clothing. To name a few; Harlesden Town Centre's Carribean, Brazilian, Polish and Somali influences, amongst many others; Ealing Road's South Asian; and Kilburn's Irish heritage.

## **Pubs and clubs**

- Ace Café
- Paradise Pub for club scene
- Windermere is best statutory listed 1930s pub
- Emerging night time economy in Kilburn

## **Parks and open space:**

- Fryent Park
- Gladstone Park
- Welsh Harp Reservoir
- Roundwood Park
- Barham Park
- Kind Edwards Park

## **Retail**

- Ealing Road
- LDO (including Cineworld)

## **Markets**

- Church End
- Kilburn
- Queens Park Farmer's Market
- BOXPARK

*Q 3: How can we guarantee that this won't just be about Wembley and involve the whole borough?*

- 3.17 Whilst most visitors to London currently stay in Zone 1 there is emerging evidence of a growing appetite for a more authentic offer, *to live like a local and discover the hidden gems* as the Mayor of London suggests in the London Culture Strategy. Brent is well-placed to exploit such markets given its cultural diversity and strong radial transport links into and out of Central London, including the Night Time Jubilee Line.
- 3.18 The LBOC launch in November 2019 has also highlighted the traction of a cultural offer that is diverse and representative of different communities. The launch gained traction through Time Out and with the hashtag trending on Twitter, promoting the breadth of what Brent has to offer.
- 3.19 The assets identified in 3.16 show the breadth that the borough has to offer, from north to the south. In addition to this, it is important to consider the appeal of Brent's town centres, which are destinations for visitors. This is important for local businesses who can benefit from footfall to the borough for food, drink and other retail. Notably this includes:
- a) Ealing Road and Kingsbury – destinations for South Asian food, clothing and jewellery.
  - b) Harlesden – global array of music, cuisine and clothing, with prominence of Caribbean, Brazilian, Polish and Somali in particular.
  - c) Kilburn – night-time economy offer, including pubs and restaurants, with The Kiln as the cultural anchor. Also the night tube at Kilburn station and great connectivity across 4 stations in total
  - d) Willesden – food and drink offer (highlighted in the recent nomination for the Great British High Street 'rising star' award.
- 3.20 Each of these neighbourhoods also has a public library centrally located, with the exception of Kilburn library at Salisbury Road, delivering a programme of events and activities, which attract footfall into the area. These sites can act as cultural anchors and focal points for visitors and residents to access information and experience a taste of the wider local offer.

*Q4: How are we maximising the benefits of tourism in Brent?*

- 3.21 Maximising the benefits runs throughout a number of areas of work rather than it being one specific workstream. It is inherent in the work of the LBOC, Inclusive Growth Strategy, and Town Centre Management and regeneration.
- 3.22 LBOC is a great opportunity for the borough to highlight the assets of the borough and promote the diverse offer of the borough and create an ongoing legacy of interest. A successful LBoC programme will encourage people to visit the area, participate in events and contribute to both the success of the programme and spend money in the local economy.

- 3.23 Promotional videos have been created that will be published in November 2019 through a campaign to support visitors to come to Brent's town centres and support local businesses. A Shop Local campaign has been launched in November 2019 with discounted offers from local businesses. Also, the third year of the Small Business Saturday Awards has been judged, with 117 nominations received for over 70 businesses, celebrating the best of Brent high street businesses. Publicity for the businesses nominated, and for the winners, should raise their profile and encourage spend.
- 3.24 A Night Time Economy Strategy and Action Plan has been produced for Kilburn, which is currently being consulted on with the community and partners. This is a shared endeavour with Camden Council, local businesses and the community. The ambition is to maximise the potential of the evening food, drink and cultural economy in Kilburn, benefiting from The Kiln Theatre as an anchor, and the introduction of the night tube at Kilburn Station. The intention is that this attracts visitors from within the Borough and elsewhere.
- 3.25 Town Centre Managers also support the local community and business associations to generate events. This has included Divali events at Ealing Road, the Heart of Wembley Festival at Wembley High Road, as well as festive light openings across Ealing Road, Wembley High Road, Harlesden, Willesden, and Neasden. Further events are being taken forward by local communities in town centre locations such as street parties and cultural celebrations. A number of local community groups and business associations are bidding to the LBOC Culture Fund and Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy to enable this additional activity.
- 3.26 Cabinet approved £4.9m capital investment in Harlesden on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to acquire the vacant Picture Palace building and to take forward ambitious designs to redevelop the Designworks building. Both of these sites have the potential to include cultural organisations and offers that can help to draw people to Harlesden, from local communities and further afield in London. A bid has also been submitted to the GLA Good Growth Fund to support this proposition in Harlesden.
- 3.27 Brent's Local Plan has shaped and supported the mixed use regeneration of Wembley Park, including promoting the area for hotel, student accommodation, office, retail and leisure uses. According to business rates records, there are 23 hotels located in LB Brent, generating £4.11m business rates, 16 (including the largest ones) are located in Wembley, generating £3.85m business rates.
- 3.28 Wembley Park is managed by Quintain and ongoing meanwhile uses including Boxpark and the Troubadour Theatre, supplement the existing assets of the Stadium, arena, and London Designer Outlet (LDO). The Council has through deployment of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy supplemented QED significant investment in public realm along Olympic Way (with over £20m invested in Zones A and B to date) raising the quality of the environment and wayfinding in the area to seek encourage dwell time and spend in Wembley.

*Q 5: How are we managing sustainability and the impacts of tourism in Brent?*

- 3.29 Whilst we are not currently focusing specifically on sustainable tourism as an issue in itself, our general work and partnerships focusing on greener and healthier travel,

clean air and waste minimisation and education will all be helping local businesses, destinations and visitors in the local tourist economy to make greener choices. Our response to the climate emergency and specifically the development of a new ten-year borough-wide environmental strategy in the new year will see an increase in our partnership working with businesses across all sectors, so there will be scope to explore specific initiatives to reduce the impacts from the tourist economy.

- 3.30 A consequence of tourism in some places has been the rise of Air BnB properties, and in some cases leading to changes in regulations to control the number of properties used in this way, particularly where they have become party destinations. Although the number of Air BnB properties in Brent is not known, there is no evidence to show that it is a significant issue either in terms of noise and nuisance, nor removal of properties from the permanent housing stock.

*Q 6: How are we mitigating against the impact of visitors to Wembley?*

- 3.31 Brent Council's primary responsibility is for the safety of visitors to Wembley during event days. The Operational Director for Environment chairs a group of local stakeholders including the police, FA, Quintain, and the Fire Service to ensure co-ordinated planning of all safety-related activity that is relevant to each event.
- 3.32 In addition, the council also deploys its own operational teams to manage the impact of each event on the local neighbourhood. This includes traffic management, enforcement of event day parking restrictions, street cleaning before, during and after each event, CCTV support, and other enforcement around licensing and trading standards. A new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) is proposed to extend enforcement powers to control other anti-social behaviour such as ticket-touting, littering and street urination. The council is also a committed partner in a programme to make the Wembley zone a 'best in class' sporting venue. This includes delivering on proposals to upgrade road signage, wayfinding and toilets and improvements to the public realm, better coordinated communications and a comprehensive network of crowd security measures including 'hostile vehicle mitigation' installations.
- 3.33 The Town Centre Manager for Wembley and Ealing Road also worked with local business to help them promote their offer to visitors. A brochure of local food and drink is available in Wembley Park hotels to encourage visits to local businesses.
- 3.34 Special arrangements were put in place secured through a S106 agreement when Tottenham Hotspur played one and a half seasons at Wembley.
- 3.35 Regarding the economic impact Wembley Park events, a report was commissioned to evaluate the economic impacts of the 2017-18 football season<sup>2</sup>, which highlights the following:
- a) £150m total economic impact to Brent, which includes £133m estimated direct expenditure in the Brent economy and £17m 'ripple effect' from economic impact flowing through the economy.

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<sup>2</sup> Economic Impact of Wembley Stadium for the 2017-18, commissioned by the FA and SSE, delivered by Deloitte Sports Business Group.



- b) 3.8m total spectators [including 1.8m spectators across the Tottenham games]
- c) 350,000 overseas spectators staying on average 4.5 nights
- d) 1,800 jobs supported in Brent [4,900 in London]

*Q7: Update on council lobbying efforts to get the government to allow a “tourist tax” in the borough, as recommended in the last budget scrutiny panel report.*

- 3.36 A tourist tax will need to be considered in the context of the wider regional and national economy. It could be challenging to set a localised tax in Brent or more specifically in Wembley that could affect its competitiveness within a London events and hospitality market. Arguably it could also impact upon Wembley (or London if applied at a wider regional level) when competing with international competition.
- 3.37 In 2017 the GLA published its research into a tourist tax, ‘Options for a tourism levy in London’ as part of wider fiscal devolution options. The London Finance Commission led this piece of work.

The report highlighted international comparators across Europe, notably Paris and Berlin, as well as other international examples such as New York and Hong Kong, which all have a form of tourism tax.

It considers the hypothesis that tourists to London are getting a ‘free ride’ with government subsidised free entry to museums, whilst also acknowledging that this has become part of the draw to London making it one of the most popular destinations in the world in recent years. Conversely, it also notes industry lobbyists evidence that other European nations have lower VAT and lower air tax duties.

- 3.38 The report offered options for implementation of a London wide tourism levy or tax. It notes that consideration of the costs for tourists to London can be considered, mainly based on a cost per night basis depending on a tiered system for types of accommodation. This then must also be balanced against the clear economic benefits of tourism.
- 3.39 It does not clearly conclude whether the tax would be detrimental to London tourism’s appeal for visitors, or whether the tax would be directly beneficial to the quality of the tourist experience. There are no clear plans at a London level for the implementation of a tourist tax, which should also be considered within the current international political context of Brexit that may create new challenges to attracting international visitors from Europe at the same scale as is currently achieved.

*Q8: How can we ensure that there are adequate public toilet facilities around major tourist attractions in the Borough?*

- 3.40 Consideration of public toilets should take account of both the council run toilets as well as privately run facilities that are also accessible to the public.
- 3.41 There have been improvements made to public toilets in the Wembley area including the introduction and refurbishment of fully accessible public toilets as part of upgrade

works to Wembley Central Station in 2011-12, and new public toilets on Empire Way 2013.

- 3.42 There are 17 current locations for public toilets across the borough; with most near to high streets and some in parks. Many of our public toilets face issues such as vandalism and anti-social behaviour though, and whilst there may be provision available for visitors and residents; they may find them closed awaiting repair or find there are rough sleepers inside. These are the challenges faced with the maintenance of public toilet provision. In addition; six JC Decaux toilets are being removed at the end of 2019 when the current contract ends and a decision has been taken not to replace them.

A decision was taken earlier this year to enter into a new advertising contract across the borough to generate much needed income to pay for savings targets within the ACE Directorate. Details of the decision are here:

<http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=455&MId=4572>

- 3.43 The locations are as follows: Barham Park Car Park, Birse Crescent, Kensal Rise, Kingsbury Car Park, Poplars Walk and Victoria Road.
- 3.44 This decision was in the context of considering all available public toilets for visitors in shops, supermarkets, libraries and council buildings. It was concluded that there is sufficient provision through available premises. Portable toilets are used for event days in Wembley to supplement available facilities.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 Brent has a strong and diverse tourism offer across the borough, which will come to the fore through the London Borough of Culture 2020. It is also increasingly being championed through Town Centre Management and local businesses through campaigns such as Small Business Saturday Awards, a Shop Local Campaign, and town centre marketing collateral (primarily videos for a social media campaign).
- 4.2 The Inclusive Growth Strategy highlights a number of potential interventions to increase tourism to Brent, including the need to continually maximise the impacts of key assets such as those in Wembley, as well as finding new ways to engage visitors with the attractions further afield in Brent including its town centres.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

There are no direct implications arising as a result of this report. If a tourism strategy is developed, any costs associated with developing the strategy which could include the impact on the council's public realm costs would need to be quantified. Also identifying any scope for income generation to potentially mitigate resultant cost increases.

#### **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Q7 refers to lobbying the government to allow a "tourist tax" in the borough. Any legally enforceable tourist tax would require new primary legislation in Parliament before it

could be implemented although there are examples of authorities and other bodies introducing voluntary donations to be added to the bills of hotel guests such as the introduction in July 2014 by the London Borough of Hackney of a voluntary £1 per night donation and a £2 per night donation introduced in the Lake District.

- 6.2 As indicated in paragraph 3.33, toilets provided under the JC Decaux contract are being removed when the current contract expires. The removal of toilets on expiry of the contract in December 2019 is required in accordance with the terms of the contract.

## 7.0 Equalities Implications

Input required

**Report sign off:**

**Amar Dave**

Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment.