
Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Scrutiny Review

of Tourism

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Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TOURISM

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	This appendix is supplied separately on request	

Section I**Introductory remarks**

As we have conducted research into the topic of tourism in Harrow, we have as a group become more and more aware of the potential benefits that tourism could bring to Harrow. These are not merely benefits in terms of hard cash to hotels, but other, less tangible benefits, concerned with bringing Harrow together as a community and improving the local environment for everyone, not only some highly visible areas for tourists.

That is not to say that the economic benefits are not significant. We have received a great deal of evidence – which we will refer to directly, and in detail – which demonstrate the advantages that tourism can bring in terms of economic development and regeneration, especially when supported by a spectrum of regional organisations who are currently actively attempting to promote tourism in outer London.

We have become convinced, in particular, of the importance of a continued commitment by the council to the funding of tourism marketing and strategic planning. After several years of campaigning by a number of interested groups, a Tourism Officer was appointed in early 2005 to develop a “Tourism Strategy” for the borough. This strategy has now been published and is something which we will be discussing in length throughout the report. We consider it to be an excellent starting point from which to take the first steps, over the coming years, to realising Harrow’s huge potential as a tourist destination. The Tourism Officer’s post is central to this. Without such a post the delivery of any of our recommendations would become impossible, and our report reflects this vital prerequisite. Indeed, we have already made our opinions on this matter clear to the portfolio holder and other councillors, such do we consider this matter’s importance.

We would in particular like to thank the council’s Tourism Officer herself, who notwithstanding a busy schedule has been able to provide us with a great deal of useful evidence for our review, as well as the large number of other external and internal witnesses who have provided assistance to us over the last few months – full acknowledgements are provided at Appendix A, at the end of this report.

The scope of the review (reprinted at section 4) sets out three key themes on which our recommendations are based – tourism infrastructure, community involvement and sustainability.

Over the course of the review we considered a wide range of evidence from a number of sources and stakeholders. Much of this evidence is printed in the appendices, including in particular background material prepared in advance of the evidentiary hearing we carried out.

**Tourism Review Group
February 2006**

Membership

Cllr Alan Blann (Chair)

Cllr John Nickolay

Cllr Jerry Miles

Cllr Clive Harriss (to November 2005)

Cllr Lurline Champagnie (from November 2005)

Co-opted members of the review group

John Hollingdale (representing Harrow Agenda 21)

Martin Verden (representing Harrow Heritage Trust)

Shiraz Jivraj (Manager, Crescent Hotel)

Scrutiny Support

Ed Hammond, Scrutiny Officer

Chris Thomas, Assistant Review Administrator

Section 2

Executive summary and recommendations

We have identified timescales – immediate, medium term and long term - for all of our sixteen recommendations, listed below in bold type. Medium term actions we anticipate being carried out within two years, long term ones after that. We consider that immediate actions should, of course, be carried out immediately.

Theme 1: Tourism Infrastructure

Marketing and resources

Harrow's Tourism Officer has now been in post for nearly a year and has produced a Tourism Strategy which has been guiding activities since summer 2005. We found that it is important for the borough in economic terms, and in terms of community cohesion, that the council demonstrate a continued commitment to tourism by resourcing this full-time tourism officer post. We also found that money had not been available under the existing budget for separate funding for tourism marketing activities, and suggested that this be remedied.

- 1: Money should be allocated, on a long-term basis, to the resourcing of the post of full-time permanent tourism officer. (Immediate)**
- 2: Separate funding should be made available for tourism marketing and development purposes. (Immediate)**

Marketing is crucial but to constitute the best value for money the council should identify different segments of the market for whom appropriate, directed marketing would have the most impact. Joined-up working between different parts of the council, and between the council and key stakeholders both within and outside the borough, will enable the borough's Tourism Strategy to bring further influence to bear upon policy-making in other areas (both geographically and by council service).

- 3: Steps should be taken to market Harrow differently to the two principal groups of visitors – those visiting Harrow in particular and those using Harrow as a base for London – in consultation with Visit London. (Medium)**
- 4: The council should recognise the importance of tourism as a regenerative tool by ensuring that closer links are built between the tourist economy and the council's regeneration function through the tourism officer. (Immediate – this recommendation will cover issues relating to shops in the town centre)**
- 5: The council should actively pursue partnership working on tourism with neighbouring boroughs, and should examine the possibility of an officers' forum (comprising other tourism and regeneration officers) with a long-term view of establishing a northwest London marketing organisation (or DMO). (Medium – Long)**

Tourist Information

The current facilities for providing information to tourists in Harrow are inadequate. Other authorities – particularly Birmingham, who were Beacon Council for Sustainable Tourism in 2004 – have adopted an approach to tourist information which involves consistently branded literature and detailed maps for visitors. The provision of this kind of information was also perceived as necessary by those members of the public who contributed to the review.

Accredited hotels (those who have been inspected and given a star or diamond rating) should be marketed by the borough in preference to those who do not have accreditation, to drive up the quality of guest accommodation in Harrow, which is currently comprised predominantly of bed-and-breakfasts.

- 6: A Tourist Information Centre with dedicated, trained staff should be established in the town centre. (Immediate – links in with 7 below and needs to be carried out concurrently)**
- 7: Steps should be taken to make marketing more coherent, with attractions and sites in the borough being marketed under the “Visit Harrow” brand. (Immediate – links in with 6 above)**
- 8: A (possibly self-funding) detailed map of Harrow town centre – and in time other local centres – should be provided, giving information on shops, restaurants, bars and other sites of interest. (Immediate)**
- 9: Harrow should mirror Visit Britain and Visit London’s “assessed only” policy by only marketing quality accredited guest accommodation. (Long)**

Transportation

Evidence suggested that group travel offered the most significant potential benefits to Harrow’s tourist economy as it currently stands. Although the impact upon the road network would be slight, work needs to be carried out to assess the capacity for accommodating coaches in the borough and improving infrastructure to make the area more attractive to group travel organisers.

A more consistent approach to signage would make the area more “tourist-friendly” and would enable signage to be integrated with visitor attractions and council maps, and would also limit the impact of too many signs in the form of “street clutter”.

- 10: Steps should be taken to encourage significantly more group travel, and to develop transport infrastructure to make Harrow more attractive to groups, including developing marketing packages in partnership with local hotels. (Medium)**
- 11: Work should be undertaken with Traffic and Transportation officers in the council to analyse current capacity issues, in particular the adequacy of coach parking and pick up and set down, and to assess future needs in respect of group travel. (Medium)**
- 12: Signage should be improved to provide “wayfinding” information which is integrated with visitor attraction and council maps. (Medium)**

- 13: Where road signs are used, the council should plan to provide “progressive disclosure” and so limit the amount of street clutter. (Medium)**

Theme 2: Community involvement

Harrow currently regards tourism as a niche activity, but promotion of the borough could have a dramatic effect on community cohesion. A more cross-cutting approach is desirable, reflecting the important link provided by the tourism officer between the local community and regional agencies such as the London Development Agency. Local people should be specifically targeted both by marketing campaigns and through direct involvement of local people, empowering them and developing a sense of civic pride.

- 14: The role of the tourism officer should be expanded – with the appropriate support – to allow for the development of relationships between the council and the local business community, and to provide a link between local businesses and regional agencies in respect of the council’s regenerative functions. (Immediate)**
- 15: More work should be carried out with local schools to encourage and develop civic pride, and to involve young people in the tourism economy. (Medium)**
- 16: Marketing should initially be targeted at local people, with campaigns being used to prototype for campaigns outside the local area. (Medium)**

Theme 3: Sustainability

We have agreed that there will be no specific recommendations on sustainability, but we would like to express support for the principle and emphasise the importance of considering sustainability when examining current and future tourism plans. All recommendations are made in the knowledge that the principle of sustainability is paramount.

We were pleased to hear that, between the completion of this report and its final publication, steps were taken to implement some of the above recommendations; in particular, funding has been secured for a permanent Tourism Officer.

Section 3

Methodology

We gathered evidence from a wide variety of sources before formulating our recommendations, and conducted a significant amount of work with the public in the course of this review.

Public work¹

- Survey of hotel guests (August – September 2005)
- Survey of Harrow residents (October 2005)
- Focus groups of Harrow residents (young people and adults), (December 2005)

Other work

- Group visit to Birmingham.
- Evidence from representatives from other bodies².
- Evidence from the local tourist industry³.
- Evidence from other London boroughs⁴.

A significant proportion of our work was carried out in the form of an “evidentiary hearing”. A number of representatives both from Harrow and external organisations attended a round table discussion at which we discussed matters pertaining to the review’s key lines of enquiry - sustainability, community involvement and infrastructure. Full details are provided in the appendices⁵.

¹ The findings of the public work we carried out can be found at Appendix A.

² London Development Agency, Visit London, Quality in Tourism, the AA.

³ In particular Paul Follows, Managing Director of the Grim’s Dyke Hotel.

⁴ London Boroughs of Brent, Bexley, Greenwich, Croydon.

⁵ At Appendix B.

Section 4

Scope of review**HARROW COUNCIL****ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SUB-COMMITTEE****SEPTEMBER 2005****REVIEW OF TOURISM - SCOPE**

1	SUBJECT	Tourism
2	COMMITTEE	Environment and Economy Sub-committee
3	REVIEW GROUP	<p>Cllr Alan Blann (Chair) Cllr Jerry Miles Cllr John Nickolay Cllr Clive Harriss (to November 2005) Cllr Lurline Champagnie (from November 2005)</p> <p>Shiraz Jivraj (Crescent Hotel) John Hollingdale (Agenda 21) Martin Verden (Harrow Heritage Trust)</p>
4	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assess Harrow Council's Tourism Strategy, and the partnerships established by the Tourism Forum, to ensure that they are robust and forward-looking 2. To progress and build on areas of the strategy with particular reference to the themes of sustainability, infrastructure and community involvement. 3. Creating an awareness of Harrow's history, and a sense of civic pride, within the borough, and so bringing communities closer together through shared heritage.
5	MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of plans to manage visitors to the borough to maximise long-term benefit and minimise any adverse impact to Harrow's local and community life. 2. Developments and enhancements to key areas of tourism infrastructure - eg, environmental enhancements to visitor attractions. 3. Implementation of plans to ensure that the economic impact of tourism is spread across the borough.

		4. Development of the tourist economy, measured through quantitative data such as guest numbers at hotels, riders on public transport and visitors to local sites of interest.
6	SCOPE	<p>To assess methods of enhancing Harrow's potential for attracting tourists, by considering:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainability – how tourism can be developed in a way that benefits the entirety of Harrow, and has a minimal negative impact upon the environment. 2. Infrastructure – particularly in terms of capacity (ie, accommodation and transportation); additionally, development of “tourist trails”, signage and tourist information, and quality enhancement of existing sites. 3. Community involvement / celebrating diversity – using tourism as a vehicle, through developing civic pride, to celebrate Harrow's diverse communities.
7	SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)	<p>Putting Harrow on the map Valuing Harrow's customers Impact through Harrow's partnerships Strengthening Harrow's communities</p>
8	REVIEW SPONSOR	Lynne McAdam
9	ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER	Peter Brown
10	SUPPORT OFFICER	Ed Hammond
11	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Chris Thomas
12	EXTERNAL INPUT	Stakeholders, partners, agencies, experts, advisers
13	METHODOLOGY	<p>Written evidence, oral evidence, research, questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, presentations, questioning senior managers and members, inspections, site visits, expert witnesses, public meetings etc.</p> <p><u>Desktop Research - August – September 2005</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking through best practice nationally and locally. • Analysis of current strategies and plans (Harrow Tourism Strategy, West London Tourism Strategy, LDA / Visit London). <p>Outreach and Oral Evidence Gathering (September onwards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Survey • Visits to local tourist sites. • Best practice visits as appropriate. • Public meeting. • Stakeholder meeting / challenge session (to include local

		businesses). <u>Other Evidence (as appropriate)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Urban Living officers. • Tourism Officer
14	EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	Celebrating Harrow's diverse communities as an aspect of a vibrant, modern part of London.
15	ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS	Time constraints (final report to Sub-Committee by March 2006) Officer resource constraints (Scrutiny Officer and Tourism Officer) Assumption that examples of best practice nationally and internationally will be generally applicable to Harrow Assumption that local businesses and those involved in the tourist economy will be willing to engage with the review. Assumption that local residents will be willing to engage in a topic which might appear remote or irrelevant.
16	TIMESCALE	Evidence gathering (to December 2005) Report writing (December – January) Report sign-off at sub-committee (March 2006)
17	RESOURCE COMMITMENTS	Scrutiny Officer to undertake desktop research, administer the meetings process, and administer oral evidence gathering. Tourism Officer to provide input into evidence gathering activities, supply evidence and expert opinion when appropriate, and make comments on draft report. Members to lead outreach and oral hearings.
18	REPORT AUTHOR	Scrutiny Officer with Group

Section 5

Tourism infrastructure

Marketing, resources and support for a full-time Tourism Officer

- 5.1 The importance of council support for tourism was something that was raised frequently in evidence received throughout, and by a number of different witnesses.
- 5.2 All the witnesses we spoke to on the subject, and the entire Review Group, have been unanimous in saying that continued council commitment to tourism is crucial. The potential economic benefits are highly significant. In cash terms, an investment in tourism reaps rewards in terms of economic development and thriving business that multiplies that initial investment many times over. For example, spending on tourism in London is worth £15 billion a year, accounting for 10% of London's GDP. It offers huge employment opportunities as well; one in five new jobs created is in tourism.
- 5.3 Naturally these figures reflect the significant draw of central London, but Harrow's proximity to the West End due to its excellent public transport links into the city should not be underestimated. The fact that Harrow has been one of the first north-west London authorities to have developed a tourism strategy means that we are in an excellent and unique position to capitalise on these developments and take a leading sub-regional role in driving forward the development of tourism in this part of London.
- 5.4 Lael Scheckter at Visit London, Emil Brannen at the London Development Agenda and Sue Finch, Chief Executive of the Tourism Society, all provided evidence which reinforced the view that an intermediate link between regional agencies and local businesses and the tourist economy is of vital importance in securing regeneration and economic development. This link is a long-term proposition, which requires significant ongoing commitment. Evidence received at our evidentiary hearing on 30 November indicates that this commitment pays dividends in terms of significant economic, cultural and social benefits which could have a lasting impact on Harrow's prosperity, and the well-being of its residents.
- 5.5 We heard that although initially a sum was made available to fund the tourism officer post for two years, at some point in the course of 2005 (notwithstanding a number of public announcements made on the subject previously) the funding was such that the post could only be secured for one year. This is because the funds for the second year had been, we were told, used to carry out the marketing and promotional activities necessary for the successful delivery of the Tourism Strategy.
- 5.6 Continuation of this ad-hoc, short term approach will risk missing significant opportunities. We were disappointed and surprised to learn, for example, that the proposals for a tourist information kiosk in the town centre have been removed from the

LAA⁶ due to the continuing uncertainty of council support for tourism development. This represents the loss of a potentially important, and moreover cost-effective, method of improving tourist infrastructure in Harrow.

- 5.7 Ignoring these kinds of opportunities risks ignoring a number of key benefits for the borough. Harrow is in a unique position in having an obvious selling point in its name, immediately recognisable both nationally and internationally. A number of high-quality local landmarks – Harrow School, Bentley Priory, West House, Headstone Manor – as well as particular areas, such as Harrow-on-the-Hill and Harrow Town Centre, provide an excellent opportunity to bring about some significant benefits to the borough – not only in economic terms, but also by way of promoting a sense of civic pride and connecting citizens to one another through their shared heritage. The evidence we have seen (in particular during the group’s visit to Marketing Birmingham) demonstrates that a clear, strategic lead, coming from the council, is vital to secure this. Evidence received on the situation in Harrow itself, as well, indicates that council involvement is crucial in co-ordinating council officers, business leaders and voluntary organisations who may often have differing interests.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 1: Money should be allocated, on a long-term basis, to the resourcing of the post of full-time permanent tourism officer. (Immediate)**
 - 2: Separate funding should be made available for tourism marketing and development purposes. (Immediate)**
-

- 5.8 The LDA, and Visit London, have adopted an approach to tourism called “market segmentation”⁷. This is used in the hospitality and wider marketing worlds as a technique to target specific marketing drives at specific audiences. Market segmentation in this context would establish what the specific draws of an area are, and then seek to ascertain what kind of person would be most attracted to that particular draw, and for what reason. Marketing would then be designed which would be particularly targeted at that particular kind of person, with the aspects of the tourist site or attraction that would be most attractive to them emphasised the most.

- 5.9 Our borough’s Tourism Strategy segments Harrow’s current market into Harrow’s residents, weddings, business travellers, group travellers, walkers and independent European short break visitors. Our focus groups and evidence provided by the LDA have led us to believe that another category should be added⁸; those who use Harrow as a base for visiting central London.

- 5.10 These people are a particularly important part of Harrow’s potential tourist market and as such we consider that work should be carried out with Visit London to see how Harrow could capitalise on this. The borough has numerous key advantages – its excellent transport links, the large range of accommodation available, and proximity to the new Wembley Stadium in particular.

⁶ Local Area Agreement. These are, briefly, compacts between an authority and a range of other partners in the wider community, constituting an agreement about which key actions are going to be carried out in the borough in a given year, how they will be completed and who will complete them.

⁷ This approach has also been adopted in Harrow – Harrow Tourism Strategy, section 6, i-iv.

⁸ Or made explicit, as its existence is implied in some of the categories mentioned.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 3: Steps should be taken to market Harrow differently to the two principal groups of visitors – those visiting Harrow in particular and those using Harrow as a base for London – in consultation with Visit London. (Medium)**
-

- 5.11 Regeneration is something which we shall touch on in our later discussions on sustainability, but it has resourcing implications which are appropriate to this section.
- 5.12 The Tourism Strategy does not discuss regeneration in depth. It is mentioned briefly as part of the SWOT⁹ analysis, in terms of the opportunities presented by regeneration of the town centre. However, of course, this is couched in terms of tourism initiatives being able to take advantage of these pre-existing plans. Nothing is planned to actively promote regeneration more generally.
- 5.13 Tourism does, however, provide excellent opportunities to bring about regeneration itself. Participants in the focus groups considered it possible that the prospect of tourism should encourage the council to persuade shop-owners to smarten up their premises and to make particular areas more attractive¹⁰. This approach is certainly one that has been pursued at Greenwich¹¹, where the appearance of the public realm was considered to be particularly important.
- 5.14 However, the external appearance of shopfronts and suchlike is only taking regeneration so far. Regeneration of the town centre has been presented as something from which tourism can gain opportunities but we consider that development of tourism can provide an impetus for this regeneration. Focus groups, surveys and expert witnesses have all considered that the promotion of independent and specialist shops in Harrow town centre would encourage visitors (probably from close by – Brent, Hillingdon, and Barnet perhaps) and provide a boost to regeneration. The benefits of tourism provide a significant driver for this regeneration. Presenting Harrow as an area which has unique and interesting shops which set it apart from other large shopping areas such as Watford and Uxbridge will confer significant benefits in the long term.
- 5.15 For this reason, we consider that steps need to be taken to align the council's tourism and regeneration functions. We have gathered that currently little work has been done to connect these two aspects of council policy. Such connections would assist the promotion of tourism into the council's core activities.

⁹ SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify and analyse key aspects of a given project.

¹⁰ The focus group in question suggested using the planning regime to enforce this, which we consider would probably be heavy handed – we prefer a more consensual approach.

¹¹ Full response from Greenwich is provided at appendix C

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 4: The council should recognise the importance of tourism as a regenerative tool by ensuring that closer links are built between the tourist economy and the council's regeneration function through the tourism officer. (Immediate)¹²**
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- 5.16 Another clear message is that partnership with external bodies is of vital importance – including neighbouring boroughs. The West London Partnership has undertaken a significant quantity of work at the moment but its high level aspirations will be difficult to effect without direct involvement by local councils. We have been told repeatedly not only by bodies such as the LDA but other local authorities¹³ that council involvement is crucial and because of the nature of tourism this must involve cross-borough working. Tourists do not recognise local authority boundaries and tourism planning must reflect this.
- 5.17 Harrow is one of northwest London's more advanced boroughs in respect of tourism development (and fortunate in already having several sites which have significant tourist potential). Hounslow and Brent are currently developing their tourist product but the nature of this development seems to us to be somewhat fragmented and, to an extent, introverted (Brent's plans are, understandably, heavily skewed towards the immediate opportunities of the Wembley development; Hounslow are looking to capitalise on their proximity to Heathrow. Hillingdon have been carrying out some work but almost exclusively in relation to business travel.
- 5.18 Outside Greater London, the situation is fragmented yet further because of the lack of central organisation from the LDA. This is a significant weakness given Harrow's position on the edge of Central London. Hertfordshire does have a relatively active tourism development function but its focus is on the north of the county, with strong links having been built with Bedfordshire and Luton. Very little work is being carried out in the southwest of the county, and neither Three Rivers DC nor Hertsmere DC carry out any work aside from an operational tourist information function.
- 5.19 The LDA and Visit London can only provide a support function but that support cannot be provided without connections at local level, providing a further fragmentation risk. Individual communications, economic development, regeneration, leisure, transportation and other officers (even those devoted primarily to tourism) who work at local level on issues which relate to tourism cannot give tourism a sufficiently strategic approach, given the spread of attractions and the nature of the infrastructure in the northwest London area.
- 5.20 Some areas have sought to establish sub-regional destination management organisations (semi-independent bodies tasked with marketing tourism and supporting local tourist businesses, for a subscription) – notably Tour East London, which was established in 1996¹⁴. Although individual boroughs have done and do continue to carry out their own work, cross-border working through a DMO¹⁵ obviously provides a powerful tool for promotion across London, and allows those boroughs involved to do much more than they could on their own.

¹² Please also see recommendation 14 below, which expands on some of these issues.

¹³ Croydon and Greenwich in particular provided information on this – see Appendix C

¹⁴ Tour East London covers Tower Hamlets, Newham, Lewisham and Greenwich.

¹⁵ A Destination Management Organisations. Full definition is provided in the glossary at Appendix A

- 5.21 Obviously we are a long way off from the establishment of a DMO in northwest London, but we consider that steps could be taken to establish formal, officer-level links to relevant officers in neighbouring authorities (including Hertfordshire), to share expertise and experience and to carry out long-term cross-border initiatives. A good example of this kind of work already having been carried out is work initiated by the South London Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2004-2006, which has brought together officers from six south London boroughs on an officer group to monitor development and co-ordinate actions.
- 5.22 It should, however, be an important corollary that Harrow's leading position amongst our neighbouring boroughs in developing tourism plans should not mean that the bulk of the costs for partnership initiatives should be borne by this authority. It is likely that in the case of a local officer forum this would not be a particular problem (since there would most likely not be any financial or resource implications) but it is an issue that deserves continued monitoring.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 5: The council should actively pursue partnership working on tourism with neighbouring boroughs, and should examine the possibility of an officers' forum (comprising other tourism and regeneration officers) with a long term view of establishing a northwest London marketing organisation (or DMO). (Medium – Long)**
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Tourist Information

- 5.23 Making sure that potential visitors have not just the maximum possible amount of information, but information relevant to them, both before and during their visit is critical to Harrow's success as a tourist destination. It is particularly important given that Harrow is not currently mentioned in any tourist guides. Such information is not only useful for visitors – it also helps local people make more of the borough they live in.
- 5.24 A key element in this is the provision of Tourist Information Centres (TICs). We observed how effective TICs can be when as a group we visited Birmingham (who were 2004's Beacon Council for Promoting Sustainable Tourism). The city used to have a network of half a dozen offices but the decision was made that this was superfluous and instead a central TIC was opened as part of the new Bullring development, with a small kiosk being built just outside New Street station. Both of these high-profile sites are extremely well-used, and connected to the city's destination management system (a computer database allowing hotel bookings) as well as providing comprehensive information on a wide range of local attractions by trained staff.
- 5.25 A TIC is not, we think, an unnecessary expense. A prominent TIC shows commitment to the promotion of tourism and provides easily accessible information to visitors but it also provides a hub for community and cultural activity which involves local people. It doubles as a community information site, keeping residents informed of local events and allowing organisers of events and those who run hotels and manage attractions to share information. Providing more exposure to these stakeholders means that the council is

playing an active part not only in tourism but in economic development and regeneration as well.

- 5.26 We received evidence from Linda Dyos¹⁶ on the resurgent importance of TICs, and how the LDA's plan to rebuild the fragmented network of such centres across London was reflected at local level. We were told that the LDA is currently undertaking a strategic review into tourist information, but were told emphatically by Emil Brannen¹⁷ that the council should not wait for this review before taking action.
- 5.27 The Tourism Strategy makes a strong case for a standalone TIC in Harrow Town Centre. It is clear that the current accommodation for this facility (in the reception of the Civic Centre) is inadequate¹⁸. The tourist information service at the reception desk is a secondary function and it is unreasonable to expect a comprehensive and authoritative service for visitors (or locals) without dedicated staff who are in regular contact with hotels, event organisers and other tourist attractions, and who are stationed in the right place, ie Harrow Town Centre.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 6: A Tourist Information Centre with dedicated, trained staff should be established in the town centre. (Immediate – links in with 7 below and needs to be carried out concurrently)**
-

- 5.28 A Tourist Information Centre will not be successful if the information such a service provides is not clear, concise, understandable and genuinely useful. Work has been done to develop marketing material that presents Harrow as a more cohesive entity – a tourist map has been produced which has been extremely popular. However, it is clear from the surveys we commissioned that visitors and residents alike consider that more, and more detailed, information should be provided. In particular, a map of Harrow town centre highlighting individual shops, restaurants and other places of interest was considered by many people to be a positive step, and one respondent suggested that it was “badly needed”. We consider that this would be an excellent way to promote in particular the night-time economy and from the evidence received we consider that such an initiative could be largely self-funding.
- 5.29 We observed how, in Birmingham, steps have been taken to “brand” tourist literature; to bring together a wide range of information which had previously been provided via a number of separate and unconnected leaflets. Now, the Birmingham brand is attached to all literature issued by the TIC. However, this is more than simply redesigning brochures. It sends a message about how a particular area views itself and also allows the council to direct tourists more effectively, and market in a more focused manner to particular groups of people¹⁹. Here in Harrow, we already have the “Visit Harrow” brand, which has been developed over the past year by the Tourism Officer.
- 5.30 It should be stressed that this is not about entirely taking over the marketing efforts of individual tourist sites, attractions and venues. It is more about working in partnership

¹⁶ Written evidence provided by Croydon in Business

¹⁷ Tourism Development Manager, LDA

¹⁸ We were, in fact, told that unless the services provided at the Civic Centre were improved there was a risk that TIC status at this particular site could be rescinded.

¹⁹ Essentially, it makes it easier to carry out promotion according to the market segmentation model explained earlier.

with those places to ensure that marketing is appropriate and focused. This allows innovative ideas to be tried – for examples, we were informed by Visit London about steps that had been taken advertising London in the US market, where close partnership working has been developed with a hotel chain, allowing marketing to include specific details on transport and accommodation – it’s about getting the right mix of partners together and bringing together information in a way that is useful for visitors.

- 5.31 We do consider that it is important that such marketing strategies are carried out with the attractions and facilities of neighbouring boroughs in mind.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 7: Steps should be taken to make marketing more coherent, with attractions and sites in the borough being marketed under the “Visit Harrow” brand. (Immediate²⁰)**
- 8: A (possibly self-funding) detailed map of Harrow town centre – and in time other local centres – should be provided, giving information on shops, restaurants, bars and other sites of interest. (Immediate)**

-
- 5.32 One area where effective marketing can be particularly important – and where partnerships can be built – lies in the assessment of hotel accommodation. There is a great deal going on in this field. We received evidence on the subject from Collette McInerney of the national organisation Quality in Tourism, and Paul Follows, Managing Director of the Grim’s Dyke Hotel, amongst others.
- 5.33 Both the AA and Quality in Tourism operate national assessment programmes for hotel accommodation, based on the star or diamond system²¹. Recently this has been rationalised to ensure that, for the first time, set national standards will apply to all guest accommodation equally.
- 5.34 The assessment of accommodation is, we have heard, particularly important. It is not a tick-box exercise, notwithstanding what might appear from the basic requirements for a particular star rating²². Scoring is complex and an inspector carrying out a visit incognito will in the first instance, assess all accommodation.
- 5.35 This connects with marketing strategies through policies being adopted by regional and national bodies across the London (Visit London and Visit Britain in particular) that state that they will only market assessed and accredited accommodation. Essentially, this means that only accommodation that has a star or diamond rating will be listed on those organisations’ websites. In Birmingham, too, we were told about the steps that have been taken to conclude a similar programme there, which has been widely successful in encouraging improvements across the hotel sector, and developing links between hotels and the council. This has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it encourages guest accommodation providers to seek accreditation, and thus enhance their services. Secondly, it builds up links with those hotels which have been accredited, allowing the council to better plan the provision of this important service in the local economy. For example, it was suggested to

²⁰ This should be carried out concurrently with recommendation 6, above.

²¹ The RAC no longer accredit hotel or guest accommodation.

²² At Appendix C

us that the council's planning policy can be used to explicitly mention a requirement for accreditation, and planning guidance can also be used as a tool to deal with an oversupply of a certain type of hotel – a strategic planning function which hotels could not undertake on their own. There are also more general benefits for the council. A scheme actively involves hoteliers within the council's tourism planning activities, and its marketing activities specifically – this means that any fragmentation within the tourism sector²³ can start to be eliminated as service providers are brought together by the council, acting as a facilitator between national accrediting bodies such as QiT and smaller hotels in particular.

- 5.36 We are aware that, for some hotels, the cost considerations that lie in coming up to the often rigorous standards demanded with QiT or the AA are problematic. Harrow has a large number of small hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts with only a handful of rooms, for whom the outlay necessary to conform might be prohibitive. However, having been told of so-called "Start" schemes which operate in certain areas, which help such providers to start on the bottom rung of the accreditation ladder, we consider that this need not be such a worry. Moreover, hoteliers should have explained to them what a useful marketing tool it is, and how it can help to drive up standards and provide a useful yardstick to measure how the quality of their services is improving.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 9: Harrow should mirror Visit Britain and Visit London's "assessed only" policy by only marketing quality accredited guest accommodation. (Long)**
-

Transportation

- 5.37 Transportation, and the effect of tourism on the transport infrastructure, has the potential to be highly visible. We do not consider that Harrow's attractiveness to tourists will be such that aggressive action is required to alter traffic and transportation plans to accommodate them, but we do think that the council could carry out a number of actions to make the practice of travelling around the borough more pleasant for visitors (and by extension, for residents), thus helping to disperse people from the Harrow on the Hill area and thus spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout Harrow.
- 5.38 Most of tourism in Harrow at the moment is currently based on group travel, such as coach-based tour groups. In fact, Harrow School only takes bookings from groups, and the limited opening times of many attractions means that group travel is most conducive to the tourist situation as it stands in Harrow at the moment.
- 5.39 At first sight group travel would seem to be a limited market to promote. Only a couple of sites might benefit; roads (especially narrow roads in Harrow on the Hill) would become clogged with coaches; groups would stay only for half a day and the rest of Harrow's economy would not benefit; the success or failure of Harrow's tourism initiatives would depend on the vagaries of tour operators.
- 5.40 However, in the course of our evidence gathering we did not consider that these criticisms were borne out. Group travel is, we were told, part of an ongoing strategy that would encourage people to come back to Harrow on their own on subsequent visits.

²³ It has often been thought that fragmentation of the tourism sector is a particularly difficult problem – see the House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Select Committee, "The Structure and Strategy for Supporting Tourism", p10

Group travel also confers other significant benefits. Environmentally, it is more sustainable (more so, at any rate, than a lot of individual private car-owners). Economically, it provides a steadier source of income, as groups tend to book and organise visits. Educationally, and in the sense of promoting civic pride, it provides ideal opportunities for visits from both local schools, and schools from further afield. Group travel also fits in with what the borough can offer at the moment. Visitor numbers generally are not yet high enough for certain attractions to be able to cater for individual travellers, as discussed above.

- 5.41 Groups can also bring significant benefits to local hotels and restaurants when stays are longer. We were told that although groups based close by would probably not stay overnight, additional marketing (specifically to group organisers; work has already been carried out by the Tourism Officer in this regard) would encourage those from further afield, who would most likely stay longer.
- 5.42 We considered, therefore, that the prominence given to group travel in the Tourism Strategy was deserved²⁴, and consider that steps should be taken to take these actions further. In particular, we thought that the idea of producing and marketing “packages” for visitors²⁵ could work for the group travel sector in Harrow. This would maintain the council’s role as facilitator between group travel organisers and local hotels, sites and other attractions. We also considered that being able to provide this facilitative service (which is suggested, but not pursued, in the strategy) would make Harrow more attractive to group organisers as a destination²⁶.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 10: Steps should be taken to encourage significantly more group travel, and to develop transport infrastructure to make Harrow more attractive to groups, including developing marketing packages in partnership with local hotels. (Medium)**
-

- 5.43 At the moment no work has been carried out to properly assess capacity issues for coach parking in particular. Provision for coach parking, and coach pick up and set down, is not significant and that there are no current plans for improvements. To make tourism a success (and to promote group travel to operators) the borough needs to be able to demonstrate that we have the facilities to support it, and to plan for and accommodate any future increase in this kind of travel.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 11: Work should be undertaken with Traffic and Transportation officers in the council to analyse current capacity issues, in particular the adequacy of coach parking and pick up and set down, and to assess future needs in respect of group travel. (Medium)**
-

²⁴ At 6 (iii) of the strategy.

²⁵ Something which has been implemented in Birmingham and other authorities from whom we received evidence.

²⁶ We consider that resource implications would not be significant (apart from the initial time spent developing sets of itineraries).

-
- 5.44 Roadside information is particularly important for coach drivers and private travellers alike. We consider that giving more prominence to local sites and areas of interest, the council can both assist in the dispersal of traffic and tourists away from known congestion areas (and dispersal to new tourist areas in the borough) and can raise the profile of tourism in the borough more generally.
- 5.45 It is important that such signage be integrated with visitor attractions and information provided by council maps and other promotional literature – this was a point raised both in our surveys and our focus groups. Brown “heritage” signs are provided on a paid basis, with no specific strategy defining what sites are promoted and where. A different approach was adopted in Birmingham, where a specific effort was made to integrate signage within the council’s wider marketing strategies. Sites have been designated by importance into three categories – A, B and C. Class A are large sites, signposted from the nearest trunk route. Class B are signposted from the nearest major road. Class C are only signposted if difficult to reach from the nearest main road. This kind of approach has a number of advantages.
- 5.46 Firstly, it allows the council to promote key attractions by the roadside in a highly visible manner, as well as in their literature. Secondly, it eliminates unnecessary visitor mileage from those who might otherwise find it difficult navigating in an unfamiliar area (and, by extension, makes the area more welcoming to tourists). Thirdly, it allows the council to adopt some consistency to how it directs people to sites²⁷. It might not, for example, be appropriate to direct visitors by car to a site which does not have a large car park. The practice was pointed out at our evidentiary hearing of directing visitors to a popular site to the nearest large car park, with further, pedestrian, signage provided to the attraction itself. We thought that this kind of approach might be particularly useful in, for example, Harrow on the Hill, to prevent bottlenecks building up on the narrow roads on the hill itself.
- 5.47 We cannot ignore the very valid concern about “street clutter”. Filling the borough with a sea of signs would obviously not be appropriate, and would make the borough’s road network uglier and paradoxically more difficult to navigate. Therefore we were intrigued by the idea of “progressive disclosure” in signage. Essentially, “progressive disclosure” describes the way in which attractions are grouped (described perhaps as “Harrow Attractions”) on trunk roads and others further from the immediate area, with further information only being presented closer to the site in question. Again, this is a more strategic approach to wayfinding – moreover, it could well overcome some of the problems which can arise when persuading the Highways Agency or TfL to place brown signs on major roads²⁸, although we should stress that neither TfL nor the Highways agency have confirmed this.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 12: Signage should be improved to provide “wayfinding” information which is integrated with visitor attraction and council maps. (Medium)**

²⁷ Described to us by Emil Brannen as “wayfinding”.

²⁸ Generally a site or attraction needs 100,000 visitors to justify a sign on a major trunk route (which are managed either by TfL or the Highways Agency). Having a single sign for a group of attractions – for example, on the A41 – might circumvent this problem.

- 13: Where road signs are used, the council should plan to provide “progressive disclosure” and so limit the amount of street clutter. (Medium)**

Section 6

Community involvement

- 6.1 Currently, Harrow regards tourism development as somewhat of a niche activity. Other authorities – particularly some others in northwest London – share this approach²⁹.
- 6.2 We have gained the impression that tourism has, in some authorities, been tacked one to the responsibilities of officers in other areas to suit operational expediency rather than as part of a distinct plan. In Hillingdon, for example, there are no posts dedicated exclusively to tourism and matters are dealt with on an ad hoc basis, with emphasis being placed on economic benefits.
- 6.3 We consider that a more cross-cutting approach is desirable, to ensure that officers in all parts of the council are able to integrate tourism and tourism development into their future plans. This needs to be linked to a programme to build relationships between other, external stakeholders. Evidence received from a number of witnesses reflected the need for an ongoing dialogue with the business sector. The Tourism Forum has provided a valuable opportunity to carry this work out but we do not consider that resources as they have been made available have allowed the Tourism Officer to carry out this kind of relationship building effectively. A limited willingness to be involved on the part of local businesses – including those whose income derives at least partially from tourism – needs to be addressed through the council demonstrating a conscious commitment to tourism development as part of an ongoing strategy of economic development in general. If the council is going to continue to treat tourism as a niche activity, so are local businesses, and meaningful engagement is going to prove difficult at best.
- 6.4 To this end the tourism officer's role should reflect the extremely important links it permits between local businesses and regional agencies. Numerous participants have told us that Visit London is currently too "centre-centric" (that is to say that it puts undue emphasis on Zone 1 and the West End to the detriment of the outer boroughs)³⁰. Linda Dyos³¹ has said that,

Central London and other high profile areas have clearly benefited from the exposure of their products on the Visit London website and in glossy marketing campaigns. However, very little of this has percolated down to those outer London boroughs which have less obvious visitor attractions but a greater need for assistance [...]

[T]he imagery used at Visit London high profile events is often of central London only and outer London destinations get little mention unless they happen to be Hampton Court or Wimbledon! Promotional literature also tends to be generic and centrist in its impact. However, boroughs have been invited to more workshops and events promoted by Visit London and these are welcome and often informative³².

- 6.5 To alleviate this bias close partnership working with the LDA and Visit London should be forged, which would be of significant mutual benefit. After all, Visit London cannot market

²⁹ Hillingdon in particular, Barnet, and until recently Brent.

³⁰ This view was expressed at the meeting of the GLA's Economic Development and Tourism Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 September 2005.

³¹ Croydon Business, Culture, Film and Tourism Manager, Croydon Business

³² It was suggested that sub-regional working would partially redress this – see recommendation 5 above.

the borough to a wider audience without being able to draw on a significant body of expertise and in-depth knowledge of the local area that can only be provided by close working relationships with local officers; and these local officers can only develop these close working relationships if they can be supported by the appropriate levels of resources.

- 6.6 We are not recommending the creation of another post (either full or part time) but consider that these responsibilities should be reflected in the tourism officer's core job description, with the additional support coming from other council officers, TIC staff and other customer-facing officers, and representatives of voluntary and heritage organisations.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 14: The role of the tourism officer should be expanded – with the appropriate support – to allow for the development of relationships between the council and the local business community, and to form a bridge between local providers and regional agencies in respect of the council's regenerative functions. (Immediate)**
-

- 6.7 Bringing tourism out of its niche also involves raising its profile with local people, through involvement and participation.
- 6.8 A further "market segmentation" division might be between residents and non-residents. We considered how the expectations of locals and visitors might be different. Some evidence, in fact, suggests that the requirements of both might be similar (rendering a market segmentation approach superfluous). These themes are developed in academic literature which we have considered (a full analysis of which can be found at Appendix A³³). However, these similarities are not borne out; not in Harrow, at least³⁴.
- 6.9 Given the different nature of residents and visitors, then, a segmented approach may well be more appropriate. We considered the example of Birmingham's "Be A Local Tourist" campaign, on which we received a significant quantity of evidence. This was a campaign targeted specifically at local people, which in previous years had run for two weeks and had used special offers and marketing campaigns to encourage local residents to visit tourist attractions. However, it had not been particularly successful (notwithstanding the fact that it was one of the key criteria by which Birmingham was judged in its bid for Beacon status, interestingly). It was thought that this may have been because it was a "one-off" event, and additionally that targeted marketing – segmenting the market into locals and non-locals – was in fact not effective.
- 6.10 However, this may well not have been the case. Attempts are being made to offer preferential rates to residents all year round, and to incorporate marketing for local people in all marketing campaigns. We were told that this is particularly effective, as the media want to speak to "local people" and won't necessarily get excited about more remote concepts like economic development. Marketing Birmingham has awarded a handful of local chefs "food hero" status, publicising them and their work, which creates media interest and brings local people to the forefront.

³³ See analysis at Appendix A, section discussing Maitland and New Tourism Areas.

³⁴ Insofar as our surveys could ascertain, which reflected a high number of business travellers.

- 6.11 We received further evidence that a more segmented, targeted approach could be more appropriate. Lael Scheckter told us³⁵ that local campaigns tend to be particularly effective. We consider that this might allow the chance for making some cost savings; local campaigns could be used to prototype for larger-scale ones. Certainly, Harrow's current local "more on your doorstep than you could imagine" has clearly been a success and lessons learned from it could inform future, more ambitious, national and international strategies (through close partnership working with Visit London)³⁶.
- 6.12 We are also aware that work needs to be carried out through empowerment as well as the more traditional, top-down marketing approaches we have discussed here. We are surprised that in many authorities in outer London few steps have been taken directly to involve local people and feel that this presents an excellent opportunity to promote principles such as community cohesion. We think that this might best be accomplished in local schools. Promoting a sense of civic pride amongst young people through encouraging involvement in tourism activities – for example, through volunteering as tourist guides – would be a positive step. The focus group with young people demonstrated a significant level of enthusiasm for this kind of initiative³⁷ which can be built on further. Sue Finch of the Tourism Society suggested that steps be taken now in schools to build a sense of "place and purpose", which she considered would be worth pursuing notwithstanding the obvious curriculum pressures schools are under.
- 6.13 Furthermore, developing a sense of civic pride in this way will provide other, more tangible, benefits. Lael Scheckter told us how the VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market is important to tourism and relies on a sense of civic pride. Inspiring Harrow residents, and thus using word of mouth to market the borough, should be followed up.

WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- 15: More work should be carried out with local schools to encourage and develop civic pride, and to involve young people in the tourism economy. (Medium)**
- 16: Marketing should initially be targeted at local people, with campaigns being used to prototype for campaigns outside the local area. (Medium³⁸)**
-

³⁵ Representative of Visit London

³⁶ Indeed, the Tourism Strategy states "As Harrow has limited awareness, it is important to concentrate initial marketing campaigns on residents and local London audience first before targeting overseas markets." (s6, v)

³⁷ We should stress that the focus groups were small groups which, in themselves, cannot provide definitive evidence because of the small sample size; however, it provides an indicative opinion which we are here using to back up other evidence.

³⁸ We have identified this as a "medium term" recommendation but we do consider that it should take place as soon as possible as the completion of recommendation 2 (on which it is contingent).

Section 7

Sustainability

- 7.1 Since it is an overarching concept, which impacts upon other areas of tourism policy, we will not be making specific recommendations on sustainability as such. Our other recommendations, however, reflect what we have learned in our discussions of this important issue.
- 7.2 The challenge of sustainability is one which has increased in prominence in recent years. The first problem is working out what the word actually means. While people across all spectrums of the tourist economy seem in agreement that sustainability is a good thing, this may be because everybody has such divergent views on its nature. We have been concerned that the word might be so vague as to be essentially meaningless – this was a point which we put to the witnesses who attended our evidentiary hearing. From the evidence we have gathered, however, we consider that it is, as Sue Finch of the Tourism Society stated, important to consider and build in to council plans to assure that long term planning is as robust as it can possibly be.
- 7.3 Coccossis³⁹, in his book on the subject, addresses the problem of definition and presents four possibilities – economic sustainability (which focuses on economic viability, which lies around improvement to infrastructure and beautification to ensure increases in capacity), ecological sustainability (where priority is placed on natural resources and tourism activities are only justified if they accord with ecological principles, sustainable development (where steps are taken to ensure the long-term viability of the tourism market, in part of protecting certain aspects of the environment) and finally tourism as part of a strategy for tourism development. The last of these seems most relevant to the approach we would wish to take in Harrow, and indeed of it he says,

From this perspective environmental conservation is a goal of equal importance to economic efficiency and social equity. Tourism policies are integrated in social, economic and environmental policies but do not precede them. This constitutes a more balanced and integrated approach, closer to contemporary thinking on tourism.

- 7.4 This reflects well on views on community involvement. Tourism, then, should in policy terms not be an adjunct in policy development but a coherent part of a whole, pervading council thinking on a wide range of topics, not merely those which are traditionally related to tourism. So links can be identified, as suggested above, with transportation, planning and economic development just as much as environmental considerations. For example, the principle of sustainability would demand that development would not lead to a large increase in the numbers of private cars in a particular area, or significantly affect the flora and fauna in a natural landscape, or cause damage to historical structures, or create large numbers of entirely tourism-related jobs to the exclusion of other sectors of the economy, or lead to large numbers of local, independent shops which might lend an area particular character being replaced by chain stores because of higher rents, resulting from higher visitor numbers.

³⁹ H. Coccossis, "Tourism and Sustainability: Perspectives and Implications" p1, in *Sustainable Tourism? European Experiences* ed Priestley, Edwards & Coccossis (CAB International, 1996), at 8

7.5 Evidence received at our evidentiary hearing supports this view. Emil Brannen from the London Development Agency stated that sustainability problems tend to coalesce around transportation; it goes without saying that increased tourism means increased traffic. Small increases at certain key sites could have an adverse impact on local traffic. The GLA has planned to implement a dispersal policy⁴⁰ for tourists, and it has been suggested that Harrow might consider something similar, to spread the benefits of the tourist industry across the borough. We feel that the six “key” attractions which have been mentioned in the tourism strategy⁴¹ meet the requirements of dispersal and so set a solid base for the development of sustainable tourism.

7.6 All things are, of course, interrelated – not least sustainability and infrastructure. Particular problems occur in urban settings, as Coccossis points out⁴²:

As tourism increases significant functional problems sometimes appear, e.g. congestion, noise, pollution [...] Accommodating the flows of visitors becomes a serious problem for those urban areas which may be small in size and may have a particularly strong historic character.

7.7 This has particular relevance to areas such as Harrow-on-the-Hill, where capacity is an existing problem, and where the solution could lie in investment in existing structures. Here we can see that issues of infrastructure and sustainability are two sides of the same coin. Environmental management schemes devoted to controlling the flow of tourists are suggested. Tourist trails are a possible manifestation of this. But it is difficult to see when infrastructure cannot be substantially altered how steps can be taken which will significantly limit the effects of tourism. Moreover, this presupposes a marketing campaign to attract tourists only to limited parts of the borough, which have the extra capacity, with significant control of numbers. As we shall see, this is not a feature of the tourism strategy, which is trying to promote a wider approach.

7.8 Sustainability is not a matter solely for the council. Coccossis says⁴³,

The search for sustainable tourism is certainly not a matter of the public domain alone. Other agents should also be concerned with the spirit of sharing the responsibility for sustainability.

7.9 This is a good point at which to mention the wider benefits of tourism in economic terms. Sustainable tourism will support positive regeneration of an area. We saw in Birmingham⁴⁴ how steps to regenerate the city centre had been carried out with tourism being central to the plan – there was very much a feeling that tourism was part of the economic development agenda. The fruits of regeneration – upmarket and landmark shops such as Harvey Nichols and Selfridges amongst them – were used to enhance the city’s tourist draw. This economic angle reflects the points discussed earlier on links with regeneration and emphasises how many of sustainability’s interests cut across a wide range of policy areas.

7.10 In London a significant number of commitments have been made to sustainability both as part of the Mayor’s Tourism Strategy. Sub-regionally, however, fewer commitments have

⁴⁰ Marketing attractions outside of the centre of London, to spread the benefits of tourism across the city and minimise adverse effects during busy times.

⁴¹ Headstone Manor, Harrow Town Centre, Harrow School, Bentley Priory, the Grim’s Dyke, West House

⁴² Coccossis, p15

⁴³ Ibid, p17

⁴⁴ Who, as noted earlier, were 2004’s Beacon Council for Promoting Sustainable Tourism.

been made⁴⁵. Similarly, in other outer London boroughs, the issue has not been widely raised. This may be because there is no specific officer with responsibility for tourism in many authorities, meaning that sustainability in the context of tourism is not an issue that has been considered.

7.11 Harrow's Tourism Strategy does contain some material, saying⁴⁶:

It is important that tourism in Harrow is managed in a sustainable way that does not exceed capacity or threaten the assets of the natural environment. By targeting a range of different markets [...] there is opportunity to diversify the tourism offer and therefore spread the benefits across the borough, over the day and evening and throughout the year. [...]

Assessments of the local impact of tourism should be made regularly [...] the proposed implementation of an Economic Impact Model for West London in 2006 will further help to monitor visitor traffic and visitor spend in Harrow to allow us to plan for a sustainable approach to tourism development in the future.

7.12 This has the potential to impact upon marketing, transportation, quality (including accreditation) as well as community involvement.

7.13 For these reasons, we will not be making specific recommendations on sustainability – we consider that our other recommendations take account of it and we are happy that the council's response to this challenge is robust. We would, however, like to express support for the principle and emphasise the importance of considering sustainability when examining current and future tourism plans. All recommendations are made in the knowledge that the principle of sustainability is paramount.

⁴⁵ Further information is available in the appendices.

⁴⁶ At section 4

APPENDIX A

Survey findings

Many of the report's recommendations are given additional credence by the results of the various public participation activities we conducted.

There were three main sources of this evidence:

- Survey of hotel guests – August-September 2005
- Survey of Harrow residents – October 2005
- Focus groups of Harrow residents – December 2005

Survey of hotel guests

A survey was undertaken in late August 2005 to gauge the opinions of visitors to Harrow's hotels of the borough.

It was decided that a number of questionnaires should be distributed to a variety of local hotels, which would then be provided to guests on check-in. The aim of the questionnaire was to provide us with some preliminary information which we could use as a context for the group's further evidence gathering discussions.

Questionnaires were delivered to the Grim's Dyke Hotel, Old Etonian Hotel and Restaurant, Harrow Quality Hotel, Comfort Inn, Cumberland Hotel and Crescent Hotel.

A sample period was chosen which covered three weeks over the end of August and beginning of September. This included August Bank Holiday.

General demographic data - Forty-two questionnaires were received. Although this is a relatively small sample, some clear trends can be identified from the results. Most respondents were male (73.8%) and aged between 35 and 49 (50% exactly). Thirteen people came from overseas, and all but four were from Europe (the others were from the USA). Of the rest, there was a wide spread. The person who had come the least distance lived in Tring, and although a sizeable proportion were from the Home Counties and South-East, several had come from the northern counties (including Yorkshire, Lancashire and Co Durham).

Other information - Most people were not part of an organised group – 31 in total (73.8%). Of those who did, the size of their group was no more than 4 or 5 people. Four were from a group of 25 or more, but these were probably visitors to a wedding which was being held in one of the hotels at the time of the survey rather than people on a coach excursion.

30 (71.4%) were only staying a couple of nights. The rest were staying for 3 or 4 nights – none of the respondents were staying any longer.

The majority of people – 28 (66.7%) – had come to Harrow on business. Of those four (9.5%) who had come for leisure purposes, proximity to central London and local amenities were important – as well as, interestingly, the reputation of the hotel (the Grim’s Dyke).

12 people (28.6%) had no plans for their evenings while staying in the borough although 15 (35.7%) planned to eat out or go out in Harrow. Other plans included visiting relatives in the borough, eating with colleagues and going to Central London.

Most (30 people, 71.4%) had visited Harrow before, and of those who had 19 (63.3%) had visited many times. Of those who were coming on their first visit, word of mouth was a factor above the existence of marketing material but others had come because of work commitments.

Only 5 people (11.9%) had visited any of Harrow’s attractions during their stay.

Travelling about, the majority (59.2%) used private cars. However, 33% had used public transport, and all considered it to be either “satisfactory” or “good”. This usage figure is probably higher than might have been expected.

37 people (88%) said that they would be returning. Most of these were returning because of work commitments but other comments included, “Very nice and quiet area” and “I like it”.

“Free text” data - People were invited to make general comments on a “free text” part of the form. Comments were generally positive. These include “excellent” (although what this refers to is unclear), “Nice shopping centre, not too far from West End”, “I have found staff very helpful in guiding me to local restaurants” and “Very helpful and pleasant staff”. Of course some of these may have been due to confusion over for whom people were completing the questionnaire – as it was given out by reception staff some guests may have assumed it was a hotel survey.

There were some more specific comments, however. One respondent thought that better shopping hours would improve things. Another suggested that a map of the central area providing detailed information on restaurants, bars, shops etc was “desperately” needed. Another commented that, “The area is not conducive to walking in the evening due to feeling unsafe and not any real attractions”.

One suggested, “Harrow needs to be sold as a ‘destination’ as well as a ‘visit’.” This may refer to the marketing brand “Visit Harrow” which was quite prominent on the questionnaire.

Survey of Harrow residents.

A survey was conducted in October 2005 as part of a community consultation event at the St George’s Centre.

It was thought to be a good opportunity to carry out some preliminary work to identify general perceptions of tourism, in advance of the upcoming tourism focus groups.

People questioned were those in the area over lunchtime on Friday 28 October. There was no attempt to obtain a representative sample as the number who filled it in were those who were willing to participate. Thus, the sample group was self-selecting.

General demographic data – eighteen questionnaires were filled in. Thirteen respondents were female and the rest were male. 50% were between 35 and 39 years old, with the remaining 50% spread fairly evenly throughout the other age groups.

The majority of people questioned were from Harrow. Of the three that were not one identified themselves as being from Brent.

Public perceptions – Respondents were asked “Are you in favour of tourism in Harrow?”. 100% said that they were. There are a number of ways to interpret this. The first is to see it as an indication that at least this small sample would be supportive of initiatives to improve tourism. The second is to say that it shows that people have not taken the opportunity to consider what “tourism” means and that they are considering it as a rather remote, esoteric concept. The fact that fifteen people do not consider that “tourism could have a detrimental impact” indicates that there is probably limited awareness of the various impacts that tourism could have, including increased traffic congestion. However, it does show that, however it is understood, tourism does have positive connotations. Moreover, asked whether they thought Harrow was “an area worth visiting”, seventeen said yes.

This sense of civic pride was present elsewhere. Asked whether “when friends and relatives come to stay, do you take them out in Harrow”, fifteen said that they did – mainly shopping and to local parks.

Asked what attracts people to the borough, many answers focused on specific sites – Harrow School and Harrow-on-the-Hill were popular responses. However, friendliness, the green belt (and other open spaces) and shopping facilities all figured highly. Some respondents considered that better marketing, and more accurate information, might be useful to further attract tourists.

Notwithstanding many people having been positive about shopping and retail, there were a significant number of people who considered that the shopping areas needed to be improved. One respondent wrote, “Town centre is appalling, dull, like every other suburb. Encourage independent shops, farmers market, make it unique.” Others seemed concerned about security issues, with one suggesting that more police be put on duty, and reducing levels of congestion.

Marketing and development - Most were not aware of the Visit Harrow initiative although four respondents were. Three had found out through council sources, one through the local paper.

When asked which benefits could be achieved through tourism, 29% of responses were a wider range of facilities and attractions. Interestingly, a similar percentage considered that the preservation of historic monuments would be another benefit. Economic development came quite low down the list, only mentioned by 15% of people.

Events – people generally thought that events such as the French market were good, and would support more of them. A music event and international market were of particular interest.

There was an even split amongst those who did and didn’t consider that they were kept sufficiently aware of events in Harrow – nine did, and seven did not.

Focus groups of Harrow residents.

The issue of wider public consultation was difficult to gauge. It was eventually decided that it would be most appropriate to carry out a number of focus groups rather than a more traditional public meeting, because this would make it easier to develop and sustain a dialogue about tourism development, which might have been difficult in a large meeting context. Three groups

were planned – one for young people and two for adults – with the issues being covered in each focus group being the same.

For the young people's group, a number of Harrow's secondary schools and colleges were contacted, and participants selected for the focus group by the school – although selection was not carried out on the basis of membership of school councils or the youth forum.

For adults, selection was carried out by reference both to the electoral roll and local phone book. Participants were not selected because of membership of local interest groups and care was taken to ensure that a representative sample of people were invited.

Young people - A focus group of young people was carried out on 21st November. Participants were all pupils at local schools.

They had an overwhelmingly positive impression of tourism and several potential positive impacts of tourism were identified – notably in relation to cultural and community cohesion, economic benefits and, notably, benefits which an increase in tourism would bring about to council service – *“It will help by putting pressure on the council to bring standards higher”*.

Negative aspects seemed to be limited to more infrastructural concerns – specifically, litter and the requirement for building new hotels and apartments. It was also suggested that additional tourists might “clog up” the transport system.

Responses on cultural issues tended to be based upon the potential cultural benefits for local people. *“Tourism makes Harrow have more cultural and interesting events, eg French market”*.

As well as a general improvement in council standards it was also suggested that increased tourism would bring about improvements to public transport.

Economic factors were seen as significant - *“Tourism brings in variety of shops and places to go to”* reflects the general importance placed on tourism. It was suggested that economic factors constituted the most important positive factors for developing tourism.

These comments were all made before the group were told about Harrow's planned developments in the Tourism Strategy. Reaction to these plans was, again, overwhelmingly positive. The group were enthused by the proposals and also seemed aware of at least some of Harrow's tourist attractions.

The group suggested a number of areas in which local people might become more involved. Additional public involvement in green spaces was suggested, although other responses were generally based around just a general increase in public consultation. Some suggested that increased public involvement would follow as a result of improved tourism infrastructure – ie, the Tourist Information Centre providing additional information for locals. It was also suggested that schools could do more work to increase involvement; that schools could teach more about history in Harrow and that schools could arrange visits to museums and places of historical interest.

Large-scale events were seen as a particular area where local people and the council could work closer together; we looked at this area in more detail, and examined how the council might enthuse and involve local people more.

Many of the suggestions made were predominantly council-led – that is, leafleting, questionnaires and advertising, rather than suggesting active community involvement in the

development of events. One idea, though, was that the council should work more closely with schools, which would itself involve in turn more of the wider community – *“Events that include schools so parents and family will be involved”*. Another suggestion was that organising committees be created to lead on these large-scale events, and that people could vote on proposals in local libraries and other public places.

Adults - adults were asked the same set of questions on 22nd November.

Responses were somewhat more mixed than in the young people’s group. Adults seemed more cynical about the prospects for tourism improvement – not because of being unconvinced that Harrow has sufficient tourist attractions (although this was a factor) but more because the council would not provide the funding and resources to make tourism development a reality. One member suggested that the council were *“too timid to show initiative”* – another suggested, *“They’ve seen how much money there is in it – but they have to be prepared to put the money in to get the benefits”*.

Initially, some participants had some concerns about the prospects for tourism in the borough. There were some worries about infrastructure, and in particular transportation – *“Traffic congestion might be a problem unless public transport were used”*. A lack of “decent hotels” was also mentioned as a possible problem. More of the adults seemed to consider tourism as quite remote, compared to the young people. There was also a concern about the prospects for “unrestricted” planning and development, which would be tourist-friendly rather than useful for locals, were tourism to become widespread.

It was suggested that people would use the borough as a base for central London, and that this aspect of tourism development offered the greatest potential. Ultimately most participants considered that this would be positive, and would enrich the local economy and community.

In general, being informed of the council’s tourism plans made some difference to the perceptions of adults. Although there was enthusiasm expressed at the possible benefits, there was a perception that, because of the large amounts of potential income involved, the council could be seen as jumping on the tourism bandwagon. There was also a view that some of the initial infrastructural concerns had been allayed, to some extent, because the presence of a strategy and a tourism officer did indicate a more co-ordinated approach to tourism and the fact that development and marketing would be controlled and planned rather than ad-hoc.

Participants considered a number of areas where the community could help the council develop the tourism product. Much of this related to the appearance of private property, both residential and commercial. A particular point was raised about encroachment of shop displays onto pavements, and we discussed how such displays, and shopfronts in general, might be smartened up. In general, however, many of the discussions in the adult focus groups tended to be based around the council taking action of its own volition, based around enforcement of planning regulations and strict licensing control, rather than partnership working.

A couple of people identified voluntary work as being critical to redevelopment of the Green Belt, and indeed this is an important factor in the Green Belt Management Strategy. Community involvement in large-scale events was also mentioned, and it was thought that the community should have a much stronger lead in this respect. However, suggestions were also made that the council should proactively offer help to community organisations.

In general, there seemed to be a feeling running through the course of the discussions with adults that the council needed to much more actively present a “positive feeling” about the borough because the perception of tourism in their mind’s eye was still somewhat vague and amorphous. Participants did agree, though, that one of Harrow’s principle benefits lay in its proximity to central London, something upon which marketing efforts should capitalise. It was suggested that the proximity of Wembley Stadium would also give a significant boost to this kind of visitor.

Glossary of terms

This is a glossary of some of the more common acronyms, abbreviations and technical terms used in the report. All of the below are defined in the report but are reprinted here for clarity.

DCMS	Departmental for Culture Media and Sport (the Government department responsible for tourism development)
DMO	Destination Management Organisation (an independent body set up to market a given area, like Marketing Birmingham)
DMS	Destination Management System (a database allowing staff (amongst other things) to provide full tourist information to visitors)
GLA	Greater London Authority
LDA	London Development Agency (part of the regional GLA Group)
NTA	“New tourism area” – an area whose tourism potential is in the process of being realised.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (responsible for local government)
QiT	Quality in Tourism (national accreditation scheme)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats – a common way of analysing (in the marketing sector) the key characteristics of a given project according to these four criteria.
VB	Visit Britain (formerly the English Tourist Board)
VFR	“Visiting friends and relatives”
VL	Visit London (formerly London Tourist Board)

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