

Minutes

Economic Scrutiny Panel

4th September, 2007, Belmont Community Centre

Present: Councillor Hopgood (in the Chair)
and Councillors Bartle, Colledge, Kelly, Lightley and Marsden

Also Present: Mrs Diane Prested
Mr Danny Harland, Durham County Council
Mr Dave Lewin, Durham County Council
Mr John McGovern, Durham County Council
Councillors Robinson & Thompson

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Guy, Simmons & Wilkes

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th July, 2007 were agreed as a true record.

3. Scrutiny of Disabled Parking in the District

Mr Harland and his colleagues from Durham County Council advised Members that their area of work covered on street parking, pay & display and park & ride. Also, new legislation had made it possible for County Council officers to enforce Blue Badge requirements, but only the police had the power to remove a Blue Badge. However, there is not a lot of abuse of disabled parking in Durham City.

Mr Harland advised the Panel that the County Council were pulling together a proposal for civil parking enforcement to relieve police to carry out other tasks. Members were very supportive of this proposal and stated that they would recommend this in the Disabled Parking Scrutiny report.

Mrs Prested advised the Panel that she had experienced problems after being dropped off at Claypath. The dropped kerb is not opposite the Gala Theatre, but on the corner of the road, this can be a harrowing experience at busy periods.

Members asked that the times and dates of the Access for All bus be given to the Police so that the loading bay in the Market place could be kept clear during the drop off and pick up times of the bus.

The Chair thanked Mr Harland, Mr McGovern and Mr Lewin for their attendance and the information they had given the Panel. The Panel gave their support for the County Council obtaining civil powers to decriminalise parking offences.

The Panel agreed that a recommendation should be added for Parish Councils to carry out a survey of disabled parking spaces within their parish and to dedicate a disabled parking bay at community centres where possible.

The Panel considered the draft report and advised of changes to the body of the report, changes to the wording of the current recommendations and added recommendations.

4. Any Other Business

The Chair informed the Panel that the Scrutiny of Tourism Report that had been deferred by Cabinet (05/06/07), for a report by the relevant Portfolio Holder and Officer. This report was now available and would be discussed by the Panel at the next meeting.

The Meeting Terminated 6.30 p.m.

Report of Economic Scrutiny Panel Scrutiny of Tourism in the City of Durham

1. Background

- 1.1 Economic Scrutiny Panel was tasked with scrutinising Tourism in the City of Durham (encompassing the City centre and the surrounding areas). The Panel requested information from the Head of Cultural Services and the Tourism & Conference Manager as well as information from the Council's partners – Durham County Council and One North East.
- 1.2 The Castle and Cathedral is a World Heritage site – Durham City has a lot of visitors passing through or day visitors, this type of tourism should be expanded to boost the district economy.
- 1.3 The Panel wished to investigate whether tourism in Durham could be boosted to make the most of the assets available.

2. Aims & Objectives

2.1 It was the objective of the Panel to discover the following:-

- To clarify what strategies are in place and whether improvements can be made
- To establish that current marketing strategies are correct for their purpose.
- The value of tourism in Durham City district
- To identify strengths and weaknesses of tourism in Durham
- To increase opportunities
- To limit and manage threats
- How Business in the district support tourism
- How Durham City Council can support business'

3. Findings

- 3.1 The Head of Cultural Services and the Tourism and Conference Manager attended several of the Panel meetings and advised the Panel on the current situation. They gave background information on tourism and explained how its profile has been raised over the past twenty years. Tourism generates an estimated £92 million to Durham City's economy, however, it should be noted that when compared with similar Cities £92 million is a low figure. It is important to build on this, but competition is extremely challenging therefore Durham City has to give something unique.
- 3.2 Over recent years tourism has come to the fore and with advances in technology it is possible to book a visit and accommodation online via the internet, therefore the boundaries are global. Instant bookings and fast technology makes competition very tough, therefore communication to visitors is very important.
- 3.3 Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive of Durham Area Tourism Partnership outlined the position and the way forward in tourism for the region. When people buy a holiday whether short or long they are buying into an experience. People will take away with them memories and experiences of their visit therefore it is vital that the experience is a good one.

- 3.4 Members expressed concern about the methods used to market and communicate various places and activities to visitors, also that marketing methods had not been used to their full potential.
- 3.5 Members also were concerned with problems with transport links due to the cancellation of buses and the reduced numbers of trains that stop at Durham.
- 3.6 Mr Tom Keating, an independent Blue Badge Tourist Guide attended a Panel meeting and made observations regarding tourism in Durham City. Mr Keating mentioned poor signage of the Tourist Information Centre and of problems with finding attractions, such as the Botanical Gardens, the Oriental Museum and Crookhall. Mr Keating suggested utilising both the Cathedral bus and the Park and Ride buses to take visitors to these places during the main visitor season.
- 3.7 The Christian Heritage Trail was another issue brought to the attention of the Panel, when visitors are on the Christian Heritage Trail obviously they visit Durham Cathedral and possibly the Church of St Margaret of Antioch but, getting to Churches such as St Lawrence's Church at Pitlington, St. Helen's at Kelloe can prove difficult if no information is available on which bus to get, where to get it, up to date timetables, where to get off the bus and how to get there when you have got off the bus.
- 3.8 Once the development at Walkergate is completed then new signage will be put in place, also visitors who park at Walkergate or the coach park will walk up to Millennium Place and directly pass the Tourist Information Centre. This will give visitors the opportunity to collect information on the attractions in and around the City.
- 3.9 Mr Colin Wilkes, Managing Director of Durham Market Company outlined tourism from a business perspective and advised that the footfall of customers had dropped which could be related to the current out of town shopping outlets at Pity Me and Dragonville and the levels of rents and rates in the City. Specialised shops would be the way to go but levels of rents and rates are very high, thus making the situation circuitous.
- 3.10 The Tourism and Conference Manager brought to Members attention figures recently received from Heritage Cities Group and compiled by STEAM (**Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model**). These figures can be found at Appendix A, which has been placed in the Members Room.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That the panel receive updates on tourism strategies on a three month basis
- 4.2 That the panel review the scrutiny of tourism in six months.
- 4.3 That the Tourist section continues to work with partners to enhance the provision of tourism in the City of Durham district.
- Make better use of the information stands at the Park & Ride
 - To encourage the expansion of the Cathedral bus service route to take in attractions such as Crookhall, Botanic Gardens, Gulbenkian Museum etc.
 - To work with the current rail provider in order to display marketing literature and uniform signage
 - Continue to work with Durham Area Tourism Partnership
 - Continue to work closely with Durham University and Dean and Chapter to encourage people to visit the district.

- To work closely with Durham City Arts, Durham City Forum and Durham Markets Company with the common goal of encouraging visitors to attend festivals in the City.
- To establish links with Tour Operators and develop Christian Heritage Trails visiting local churches of interest as well as Durham Cathedral.

- 4.4 To ensure that the signage in the City is uniform, correct multi lingual and gives an approximate distance.
- 4.5 When the City Centre Co-ordinator has been in post 6 months check to ensure that the City is making the most of what it has to offer visitors.
- 4.6 To market specialist brochures of district attractions and to make this available in hard copy and on the website. To develop the idea of the attractions within the district as a bicycle wheel with the City Centre as the centre and the various district attractions to appear as spokes of the wheel.
- 4.7 To liaise with hotels in the district to ascertain the types of accommodation on offer and other facilities provided by the hotel. It is recommended to ensure that hotels display relevant and update information relating to the district attractions and to pursue the conference circuit marketing.
- 4.8 To liaise with various partners especially Durham City Forum to market festivals and perhaps increase the length of the Christmas and Summer festivals. To encourage the marketing of the Durham Miners' Gala on a larger scale and the possibility of a Mining Heritage Centre. To market the many walks in the district, the Necklace Park, Crowtrees Walk, Ghost Walks in the City Centre. Encourage the development of children's activities such as concerts, plays and festivals.
- 4.9 Members to take part in a stock-take exercise – for each member to identify an attraction or place of interest in their ward.
- 4.10 To fully support the suggestion of a unique shopping experience in Durham City and to undertake a review of the business rate criteria within the district, to entice retailers into the area.

Report of Economic Scrutiny Panel

Scrutiny of Disabled Parking within City of Durham District

1. Background

The Economic Scrutiny Panel was tasked with scrutinising the available provision of disabled parking within the district.

Members had noted that there was a problem with able bodied drivers parking in disabled designated spaces; however, this mostly happens on privately owned land.

The Panel wished to explore how to discourage able bodied people from using specially designated spaces for disabled people.

2. Aims & Objectives

It was the objective of the Panel to discover the following:-

- What facilities are currently available
- Are current facilities adequate
- What are the future needs
- Focus on disabled parking within the District and aim to improve
- How the Council can work with other organisations to improve current situation

3. Findings

The current parking facilities for Disabled Drivers in Durham City are as follows:-

City of Durham Council Car Parks – 2 Disabled Parking Spaces

Park & Ride

Belmont –	12 Spaces
Sniperely –	5 Spaces
Howlands –	6 Spaces

There are several private car parks within the City that have dedicated disabled parking spaces. Also, the out of town retail parks at the Arniston Centre and Dragonville have a large number of disabled parking spaces. Superstores in the district also provide disabled parking spaces.

However, inconsiderate parking of able-bodied people in disabled bays can only be enforced by the private land owners on their land. Some private car parks display notices warning of wheel clamping but this is directed at any unauthorised parking.

The Disability Now, the Disabled Drivers' Association, Disabled Drivers' Motor Club and British Polio Fellowship are campaigning to end the abuse of disabled parking bays by non-disabled people. The Baywatch Campaign aims to improve public

awareness of the misuse of designated disabled bays and encouraging drivers not use disabled bays unless they are a valid blue badge holder. The Campaign has the backing of the Minister for the Disabled and many disabled organisations together with major grocery retailers.

The Baywatch Campaign has gained interest from many high street supermarkets, motoring organisations and some local authorities.

Disabled drivers who display the Blue Badge are entitled to free on street parking. In fee paying car parks disabled drivers whilst having designated spaces are expected to pay unless otherwise stated.

A disabled lady came along to a panel meeting and gave Panel Members an insight into problems she encounters regularly. The most common problem encountered is able bodied people parking in designated disabled spaces. Also there are problems for wheel chair users when people inconsiderately park their vehicles in front of dropped kerbs thus making it difficult if not impossible to reach their destination.

The Manager of Prince Bishop's Shopping Centre and the Managing Director of Durham City Markets Company agreed with Panel Members that Shopmobility should receive more publicity. The Managing Director of Durham Market Company advised Members of abuse of the blue badge scheme in parking bays to the rear of the Market Hall.

4. Outcomes

Access for All provide a bus that takes disabled people on shopping trips to various locations which otherwise they would find difficult. Shopmobility offers a service for a nominal fee, of collecting disabled shoppers from their homes and drops them off at the shopmobility centre in Durham where scooters have been prebooked for them

That more publicity should be given to organisations such as *Access for All* and *Shopmobility* to promote the good work they do which is a benefit to the City. Thus encouraging disabled people into the city centre which otherwise may have been inaccessible to them.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That Durham City Council monitor its public carparks and alert able bodied drivers who have parked their vehicles in a designated disabled parking bays illegally that enforcement action will be taken against them.
- 5.2 That Durham City Council publicly support the Baywatch Scheme to stop abuse of designated disabled parking spaces
- 5.3 To encourage Durham County Council to include in their Blue Badge Packs information about Access to All and Shopmobility.
- 5.3 To urge Durham County Council, University Hospital of North Durham, Health Centres and Doctors' Surgeries to display Access to All guide and Shopmobility leaflets at their waiting areas (Park and Ride). Also that hospitals, health Centres and Doctors Surgeries display Access for All bus timetables on their notice boards.

- 5.4 To encourage the Community Police or Traffic Wardens to be available to ensure that the loading bay dropped kerb area of the Market Place is clear for drop off and pick up of the monthly Access Bus.
- 5.5 That City of Durham Council give their full support to Durham County Council as Highway Authority, in their proposal to obtain Civil Powers in the decriminalising of parking offences.
- 5.6 That Parish Councils carry out a survey of disabled parking facilities in their parish and where appropriate designate at least one disabled parking bay at their Community Centres.
- 5.7 That Durham City News advertise Shopmobility and the timetable for the Access for All bus in future editions and include a feature on the disabled facilities in Durham City.



**QUESTIONING PLAN
PLANNING SHEET**

TOPIC FOR SCRUTINY: To Scrutinise the effectiveness of the current provision of CCTV
Purpose of Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the current system fit for purpose? • Is the current system value for money? • Should it be extended?
Specific issues to be looked at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Required Outcomes
Possible Risks

KEY TASKS	
Documents/evidence/research <i>What?</i> <i>Why?</i>	When`
Consultation <i>Who/what?</i> <i>Why?</i>	When
Witnesses <i>Who?—</i> <i>Why?</i>	When