

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 5th December, 2007.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chairman), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Jackie Earl, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson, Cllr Andrew Sherris and Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley.

Officers: N.Schneider, I.Robinson, Ms K.Winspear (DNS; N.Hart, P.Mennear (LD).

Also in attendance: Alan Slater (British Waterways); Ms Tanya Gray (Sports Specialist Advisor, One North East); Ms Julia Frater (Head of visit Tees Valley).

Apologies: Cllr Mick Womphrey.

ALC 27/07 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

ALC 28/07 **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 1st October 2007**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th October 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ALC 29/07 **Review of River Based Leisure Facilities**

Further to the Work Programme for the review, consideration was given to presentations from Tanya Gray (Sports Advisor, One North East) and Julia Frater (Head of visit Tees Valley) outlining the benefits that both the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games; utilisation of the River Tees and the promotion of tourism could offer the sub region.

Tanya's role was to consider and advise upon the economic impact of sport for the North East region of England, and act as the key officer in terms of linking with regional preparations for the Olympics. Members were provided with a document outlining the vision for London's Games; which included a breakdown of responsibilities split between the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (L2012); who were responsible for the preparation and staging of the Games; and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), who were responsible for new permanent venues and infrastructure for the Games.

The overall aim of the strategy for the Games was to provide a sustainable legacy post 2012 both within London and all of the regions. Many of the venues used would be retained either in London, or decentralised to the regions. St. James Park, Newcastle had been identified as a venue within the North East for the football event held during the Olympics. It was noted that many business and procurement opportunities existed for North East companies interested in tendering for the hundreds, if not thousands of contracts arising from the Games. Help would be given for smaller firms wishing to co-work with larger companies and an electronic browser database facility was available for companies wishing to access contract and joint working opportunities.

The Games also offered particular benefits for tourism, with over 500,000 plus

visitors expected to London alone. It was essential that those visitors were also advised of the tourist opportunities provided by the North East. There were also opportunities for sporting facilities/venues within the region to advertise their use for pre-Games training camps, whereby Olympic teams could relocate and train some times up to four years in advance of the tournament as part of their preparations. 20 such strategic sites had currently been identified, including the Tees Barrage, and these were in the process of being assessed for suitability by L2012, with a decision expected in January 2008. It was noted that discussions had been held, and would continue with British Waterways, regarding upgrading the Barrage to increase its attractiveness and appeal as a potential pre-Games training camp by ensuring the facility was open over a longer period for use as a water sports facility. The facility would need to be marketed as a key, sustainable tourism attraction in the region and could benefit from increased use in the lead up to the Games.

There would be particular skills required in terms of sports coaching and volunteers needed to help facilitate the Games; with other research being carried out to identify any gaps in skills provision.

Members were advised that in advance of L2012, Sport England would seek to ascertain demand within the country for the various sporting facilities used during the Games that could be relocated to other parts of the region following the Games. This regions interest should be channelled through One North East so as to avoid duplication and unnecessary competition.

Members noted the potential also existed for local authorities within the region to engage more regarding the various opportunities for joint working promoting health, children and young people and especially the cultural opportunities. It was noted that the success of recent river based prestige events, such as the World Canoe Championships, the Dragonboat Race etc, could be built upon in this area through tourism. Members were advised that Sport England were leading on using the Olympics to raise participation in sport.

Members were advised that Tourism Network North East had commenced in its present form in 2003 when One NorthEast assumed the responsibility for the strategic leadership of the tourism industry in the region. In 2004, it took over the Northumbria Tourist Board and created One NorthEast Tourism; from which was formed a Regional Tourism Strategy proposing the creation of 4 Area Tourism Partnerships (ATP), of which visit Tees Valley represented the Tees Valley area.

As Head of visit Tees Valley, Ms Frater outlined its formal partnership and Board arrangements and explained that its role was to focus on bringing businesses and other organisations together to improve the visitor experience in their area. By working together with businesses and public agencies, they were able to agree what was important, who does what, and how initiatives were to be funded. One of the key documents produced by the ATP was the Area Tourism Management Plan (ATMaP) which set out priorities for future actions in each area and the lead body for each activity.

Details of some of the achievements made by visit Tees Valley in its first year of operation were summarised; together with details of some of the up and coming events planned for the region. Forthcoming promotional campaigns will focus on

'green' tourism initiatives and the advertising of Extreme sports. It was also planned to introduce a 'Privilege Pass' next year allowing free entry for all tourist attractions in the Tees Valley, with a small donation being given to charity. A major piece of work is a survey of visitor accommodation occupancy rates and an ongoing assessment of planned hotel developments.

Members made reference to the potential to provide more attraction/drop off points for boats using the river for social purposes; it was noted that this need for increased river facilities can be picked up through the Local Development Framework process by making sure planning obligations are in place.

Members enquired as to how plans for the river fitted into the Council's strategy for regeneration both of the river; and more generally for the Town Centre. The Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services advised that he would be prepared to arrange an all member seminar in the New Year encapsulating all of the developments envisaged within the Stockton Regeneration Strategy.

CONCLUDED that the evidence received from Tanya Gray (Sports Advisor, One North East) and Julia Frater (Head of visit Tees Valley) be noted; and thanks be extended to both witnesses for their valuable contribution to the Select Committee's work.

**ALC
30/07**

Work Programme

- **To review the project plan in respect of the current review**
- **To discuss ideas for future review topics**

Members were presented with an updated Work Programme.

At the request of the Chair, Neil Schneider provided an update for Members on the current situation of HMS Kellington on Stockton Riverside.

A series of meetings with senior representatives of all key partners (Sea Cadets, Environment Agency, Planners, British Waterways) had led to significant progress.

Frank Cook MP had arranged a meeting with Minister for Defence for two weeks time and, coupled with the offer of help from an experienced Marine Salvage Company, there was optimism that works could begin next year.

CONCLUDED that this information and the Work Programme be noted.