The Marketing of Cardiff
The City Government
Response
THE CITY GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF
THE ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON “THE MARKETING
OF CARDIFF” REPORT

Introduction

The time given by The Scrutiny Committee regarding “The Marketing of Cardiff” has been very helpful in identifying key issues. We thank the Committee Members for their interest and commitment to this process. The outcomes very much reflects our own views, which have been largely articulated in our Strategic Tourism Growth Area Action Plan.

As the report itself acknowledges, the scrutiny of the marketing of Cardiff has taken place over a considerable time span, during which time much has happened that has affected how Cardiff is promoted, both by the Council and its partners.

It should be noted that at the inception of the Scrutiny process the Marketing and Tourism Service had been operational in its new form for only 6 months. Also that the Cardiff Initiative was undergoing substantial reorganisation and staff changes. Additionally changes have been made within tourism structures on a regional, national and international basis during this period.

Among the developments since the start of the process in October 2000 are:

- Cardiff was successful in reaching the shortlist to be European Capital of Culture in 2008, much assistance was given by Marketing and Tourism in the formulation of the 2008 marketing analysis and planning.
- The city has hosted a series of high profile sporting events such as the FA Cup Final, Nationwide League Play Offs and the Network Q Rally;
- The Cardiff Bay Barrage has been completed and opened to the public along with other new developments on the waterfront; this service now being operated under Marketing & Tourism;
- Low cost airline BMIbaby has established a base at Cardiff International Airport, opening up potential new markets – with promotional activity being supported on a joint basis through The Cardiff Initiative, the Wales Tourist Board, Capital Region Tourism and the Council;
- The city’s events programme has developed and increased substantially, especially in Cardiff Bay;
- The city has been designated a Strategic Tourism Growth Area by the Wales Tourist Board, who have ringfenced up to £2m of capital funding to improve the tourism infrastructure and product in Cardiff;
- Progress has been made on the development of the Sports Village and St David’s Phase 2 projects, and the Castle conservation and visitor centre project, (visitor centre subject to planning enquiry).
- A Best Value Review of the marketing of Cardiff’s civic venues and events has been undertaken. The service was given a “good” rating;
- A reorganisation of Cardiff Marketing has resulted in the creation of The Cardiff Initiative, with a new team of staff. Monthly meetings are held.
with The Cardiff Initiative to check progress against the targets set by the Council;

- The creation of a new regional tourism partnership, Capital Region Tourism, (CRT), which recognises the role of Cardiff as the capital city and gateway to South East Wales. CRT is funded by The Wales Tourist Board.

All the above, along with new developments and initiatives constantly coming on line, mean that the way Cardiff is marketed as a leisure, business, events and conference destination is constantly reviewed and modified to respond appropriately to new opportunities and circumstances and remains customer focussed. Considerable progress has also been made with regard to City Centre development to enhance retail opportunities within the City. Discussions are continuing regarding the £315 million St David’s Phase 2, which will transform the City Centre retailing opportunities.

In addition, regular research is conducted to establish the views and profile of our visitors to ensure that we are targeting the right markets in the right way and to pick up on and respond to any specific feedback that might help improve the way we do things. We also gather data, statistics and information that enable us to measure our performance and compare with that of other cities and learn from best practice elsewhere.

The city has many valuable assets in terms of high quality visitor attractions such as Cardiff Castle, the National Museum and Gallery and Techniquest; a compact waterfront location close to the open countryside; improving facilities including the many new hotels that have recently opened and the conference facilities at City Hall, and very importantly its friendly and welcoming people.

All these are always rated highly in our visitor surveys however we are also aware that there are areas where we could make improvements, such as visitor signage, and we are working with those partners both internal and external, to bring about improvements.

Responses To Recommendations

1. **Engage the National Assembly for Wales and the Wales Tourist Board in recognising Cardiff’s role as a capital city as well as the role it plays in attracting visitors to Wales and how they can best support this.**

Council officers and The Cardiff Initiative work closely with the Wales Tourist Board (WTB) as agents of the National Assembly, along with the regional tourism partnership – Capital Region Tourism – to ensure Cardiff’s role in attracting visitors to Wales is fully recognised and supported. The relationships are healthy and positive, particularly with regard to the promotion on the back of major events such as the FA Cup Final, Wales Rally GB and the Ryder Cup. The WTB have recently screened their first TV commercial for Cardiff, which is going out on national networks.
(2) Determine and publicise the various roles of the partners involved in the marketing of Cardiff, and establish a Tourism Forum to better aid communication between all the organisations across the city who have an interest in the marketing of Cardiff.

(3) Improve communication within Cardiff to engage with all sections of the community.

The consultants who drafted the recently approved Strategic Tourism Growth Area (STGA) Action Plan also made a recommendation for the re-establishment of a Tourism Forum, which the Steering Group will now consider. It should be noted that forums were used in developing the plan to ensure the widest possible consultation and understanding.

In addition, we are in regular communication with groups such as the Cardiff Hoteliers’ Association, The Cardiff Retail Partnership, South East Wales Attractions Forum, The Waterfront Partners and of course The Cardiff Initiative and Wales Tourist Board. This works as a two-way process - we share information on our work and forthcoming developments and receive feedback in return that we use to inform our future planning and pass on to other Service Areas if relevant. In the case of the Waterfront Partners and The South East Wales Attraction Forum, we play an active role in delivery of initiatives.

The Best Value review of the marketing of Cardiff’s Civic Venues and Events provided an opportunity to hold a series of focus groups with a cross section of local residents. This research gave us very useful feedback on the attitudes of local people towards our services and what type of marketing activity would reach them.

(4) Continue efforts to find appropriate finance to build the Eastern Bay Link and thus complete the PDR, as a cohesive transportation infrastructure is essential for the successful marketing of Cardiff.

Marketing and Tourism are constantly working with colleagues in Traffic and Transportation to identify ways to improve visitor access to and around the city, both by car and public transport. Work on a signage strategy is already underway and promotion of the new BayXpress bus service is proving effective.

(5) Consider what opportunities exist to facilitate the building of a Conference and Convention Centre in Cardiff.

A feasibility study has been commissioned, as recommended in the STGA Action Plan. The results will be available at the end of the year.

(6) Proactively progress a long term plan to address the gap in visitor numbers which will occur once Wembley Stadium has been replaced.

(7) Proactively attract a number of more diverse events, to provide broader attractions for the wider population and thus add to the current festival programme already established.
The Events Team is always looking to identify new events to add to the city's portfolio. Officers regularly visit events and festivals taking place elsewhere to assess whether they might be viable in Cardiff and attractive to visitors as well as local residents.

As identified in the Scrutiny report, when new Wembley stadium is completed many of the high profile matches that take place in the Millennium Stadium will be lost. Marketing and Tourism are working with the Stadium and others to attract new events to fill the gap. We also understand that The Wales Tourist Board is making efforts to establish replacement events through their contacts.

The new Wales Millennium Centre will provide an opportunity to attract a new range of events, with long running shows, which offer greater capacity, thus allowing packages with accommodation operators.

(8) Progress the establishment of a Cardiff Museum

A feasibility study has been completed as recommended in the STGA Action Plan. The plan is awaiting formal comment / approval.

(9) Notwithstanding the progress achieved already, provide adequate resources to allow City Hall to achieve its full potential.

Much work has taken place at City Hall over the past couple of years to bring its facilities up to the standard expected of a major international conference and meetings venue. A modest budget has been made available to market it as a venue.

The building is already considered to be one of the most prestigious in Wales and booking of the major rooms are now well established. It is also a positive sign that event organisers want to use it for VIP events – e.g. for corporate hospitality for the FA Cup Final and as Rally HQ. Income from functions and conferences rose by 69% in 2001/02 and by a further 61% 2002/03.

The annual room hire in 2000/2001 was £136,480 and the number of functions was 148 per year. This has now increased in 2002/2003 to 392 functions, attracting income of £361,758.

Increased investment and resources can only help build on the work that has been done so far and enable City Hall to reach its full potential.

(10) Fully utilise the 2005 celebrations and also give greater attention to the many non-sporting assets which Cardiff possesses, for example its parks, as an opportunity for expanding the marketing of Cardiff

As recognised in the report, the work undertaken for the bid to be Capital of Culture in 2008 will prove useful in terms of preparation for the 2005 celebrations. Plans are being developed for a city-wide celebration during 2005. The celebrations will provide a platform for a 12-month marketing campaign for Cardiff, in which all sectors including the Council, The Cardiff Initiative, hotels, attractions and others will be able to participate.
Work is also in progress to enhance the events infrastructure within Cooper’s Field under the Tourism Growth Area Action Plan.

(11) Prioritise the work currently being undertaken on coach parking to enable it to be completed as soon as possible.

A joint working group has been set up to look at progressing developments at Sophia Gardens with approval to be sought on the approach to be taken. A report to Cabinet is being prepared by Traffic and Transportation, who have been working with Marketing and Tourism and H & P. Part funding has been earmarked within the Strategic Growth Area Action Plan. Additional work is underway through Traffic & Transportation to establish additional drop-off points and coach waiting bays around the city.

(12) Produce a programme to complete the corporate branding of the Authority’s services and sites.

While the corporate Council branding is used on all publications and promotional material relating to Council venues and activity, appropriate sub-branding is used wherever appropriate to identify specific products or events. This sub-branding – such as that for Cardiff Castle and the Summer Festival – forms an integral part of the marketing of the product. In addition, the “wavy” Cardiff logo developed by The Cardiff Initiative is adopted as part of the destination promotion of the city.

(13) Make Cardiff Visitor Centre’s accommodation booking service more accessible by featuring it on the Authority’s web site.

There is a link to the TCI web site from www.cardiff.gov.uk and the accommodation booking service is available on the TCI web site.

(14) Encourage the permanent establishment of a Welcome Host Wales training course for all Cardiff taxi drivers.

Marketing & Tourism were actively involved in the development of the Cardiff Welcome Host course and work with the Welcome Host trainers and developers to encourage all those working in the tourism sector to take the course. Some taxi drivers took the course prior to the Rugby World Cup in 1999. However, in discussions with representatives of the taxi firms, it was not felt that this was necessarily an approach, which would work for all but those already committed. Additionally, it seems funding to enable us to offer free places may no longer be available. We will take further soundings on this matter.

Recently we have taken the opportunity to write directly to the taxi companies to advise them of forthcoming conferences, highlighting the fact that they are important ambassadors for the city. This communication channel will be used to provide a positive way forward for the future.

COUNCILLOR MARION DRAKE