

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

**Report to:** The Economy, Arts, Sports and Public Realm Policy & Accountability Committee.

**Date:** 20/11/2023

**Subject:** **An emerging approach to developing and promoting our visitor economy.**

**Report of:** Cllr Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for the Economy

**Report author:** Logan Smith, Visitor Economy Officer

**Responsible Director:** Jonathan Pickstone, Strategic Director for The Economy.

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### SUMMARY

This report presents an emerging approach to developing a plan for promoting Hammersmith and Fulham as a culturally diverse and visitor friendly destination, increasing the numbers of visitors to our borough, improving their experience, and growing the local economic impact.

Targeting residents' friends and family, leisure seekers and business travellers, the report presents current projects underway and an outline plan for proposed future activities encompassing branding, sustainability, cultural engagement, and business collaboration - aiming to position the borough as an easily accessible, and sustainable destination with a range of attractive economic, environmental sporting, heritage, retail, and cultural assets.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Committee to both note and comment on the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Our Values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the H&amp;F Values</b>
Building shared prosperity	The development of our visitor economy aims to increase visitor numbers and awareness of the attractions. This will build economic growth, sustainability, and community engagement within the borough.

Creating a compassionate council	This plan looks at collaboration between the council and our various cultural centres, engaging with people from diverse backgrounds. Our co-production team will be engaged as the plan develops.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	By engaging with residents and community groups/businesses in the development of this plan, we are emphasising community engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The plan relies heavily on partnership collaboration and explores third party sponsorship of certain initiatives.
Taking pride in H&F	By promoting and providing a sense of ownership and pride among residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the borough.

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## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

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## Background

1. The visitor economy refers to the economic activities and industries that revolve around and cater to tourists and visitors. These include hospitality, transportation, accommodation, attractions and many more. Tourism is the act of traveling for leisure, business, and other purposes involving diverse activities and motivation of people exploring destinations away from home. Destination management revolves around strategically planning and coordinating resources and services to enhance the appeal to tourists, including business travellers, making sure they have a great impression from when they first arrive to when they leave. This includes first-time and repeat visitors. It also includes a geographical range of visitor origins, from local to international.
2. The development of our visitor economy is motivated by several key factors. Our Industrial Strategy places a strong emphasis on creating a distinct sense of place within our borough, forming our diverse tourism offer. As detailed in appendix 1, the borough's tourism proposition is strong: we are a cultural hub with amazing sport, green space, and retail options. In addition, our new Cultural Strategy also outlines the path for a more culturally rich and diverse Hammersmith and Fulham.
3. The report addresses the proposed target audiences, new and ongoing initiatives as well as a range of possible future developments with the

overarching goal to not only increase the number of bed stays, footfall, and revenue per visit, but also to enhance their experience and economic impact, making H&F a more attractive and sustainable destination for residents and tourists alike.

4. It is also worth noting that tourism is still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are improvements and the industry is slowly recovering, we are still not at the pre covid levels, according to visit Britain, last year in 2022, visits to the UK were still down 24% from 2019.

### **Proposed target audiences**

5. To effectively cater to a diverse spectrum of tourist and visitor motivations, three proposed primary target markets have been identified as a starting point in our plan to build the visitor economy.
  - Residents' friends and family: A diverse group who has a special connection to our borough. Comprising close friends, family members and acquaintances of the borough's residents, they share a unique and historic bond with the area and local community.
  - Leisure tourists: Catering to both domestic and international tourists who visit London, this encompasses those who are keen on vibrant nightlife, entertainment venues, shopping, dining, and cultural exploration. Westfield, Hammersmith Apollo and the three professional football clubs are some of the popular locations in our borough.
  - Businesses and conference visitors: Visitors who visit the borough for conferences and those travelling for professional purposes. Business visits accounted for 21% of all inbound visits to the UK in 2019 and is the third highest market for domestic overnight stays in the UK according to VisitBritain.

### **Workstreams already underway**

6. A new role of Visitor Economy Officer has been in place in the Economy department since June 2023. Since the postholder's appointment, the below workstreams have begun to build and co-ordinate the visitor economy in Hammersmith and Fulham. These efforts signify our commitment to becoming a vibrant and attractive destination for both residents and tourists.

### *Shepherds Bush Comedy Festival*

7. Officers are exploring how best to deliver the manifesto commitment to resurrect the Shepherds Bush Comedy Festival, speaking with private companies and internal colleagues on possible options and opportunities with the goal of advertising it for a private company to run, potentially in summer/autumn 2024, bringing in leisure and entertainment visitors from across the country.

### *Developing the H&F Tourism Network*

8. The first meeting of the inaugural H&F Tourism Network was held in early November. This network comprises local tourist attractions, hotels, and retail venues. Objectives range from sharing knowledge and intelligence on the current state and trends of the local visitor economy, fostering collaboration among partners and creation of new and enticing deals while addressing tourism opportunities and challenges.

### *Developing the visitor economy around the Civic Campus and North End Road*

9. The Civic Campus is positioned as the epicentre of Hammersmith and holds immense potential for fostering tourism in the borough, while instigating a rejuvenation of the town centre. Hammersmith and its surroundings can become a dynamic and multi-faceted destination, with salience among visitors both here and abroad. Along with North End Road, officers are looking at boosting footfall, job creation and improved infrastructure with new culinary and dining tours, festivals, accommodation packages, competitions and possible new events attracting both residents and tourists alike.
10. Officers will look to develop a marketing strategy specifically for North End Road. This strategy will focus on celebrating the heritage, culture and people of North End Road, increasing dwell time in the area while also attracting new and returning visitors. There will also be a focus on attracting new, quality retailers and businesses while broadening the market offer with more diverse traders.

### *Promoting the borough via VisitLondon.com*

11. Officers are working with London and Partners – the business growth and destination agency for London - to update their current webpages on Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush to incorporate more attractions in the borough. VisitLondon.com receives millions of views each year and is the first stop for many international leisure visitors when looking at what to do in London.

### *Sport partner discussions*

12. Initial discussions have begun with local sporting clubs around collaboration and new ways of working, including with Fulham Football Club on how best to capitalise on their new riverside development as an amazing local attraction for both local and international visitors.

### *Using major events to drive footfall*

13. Officers are also scoping how best to leverage major events hosted in the borough as a strategic means to increase visitor numbers and enhance the borough's appeal. This includes the upcoming 2024 London Tech Week at Olympia, where we aim to harness the momentum to draw in visitors and

showcase the diverse offerings of the borough. We are engaged with London and Partners on attracting business events.

### **Proposed new workstreams**

14. The future workstreams below are proposed to enhance the visitor experience and further amplify the borough's appeal.

#### *Destination Management partnership and plan development*

15. As referenced in the Cultural Strategy approved by Cabinet in October, there is an ambition to develop an approach to destination management for the borough. This could involve formulating a broad strategic framework (a destination management plan) steered not only by the Council but also by key partners (a destination management partnership).
16. The likely components below would entail both a cross council endeavour across multiple departments and close partnership working with external partners, with the overarching goal of enhancing the visitor experience in Hammersmith and Fulham, ensuring visitors have an enjoyable experience while in our borough.
  - i. Community and Environment: We are dedicated to fostering safer communities, maintaining cleaner areas, and optimising ease of movement throughout the borough.
  - ii. Sustainable Travel: Promoting sustainable travel is a priority, and we will actively encourage the use of our cycle lanes and public transport options to reduce the carbon footprint of visitors.
  - iii. Attraction Development: Identifying opportunities for the creation of new attractions and unique experiences, further enriching the visitor landscape.
  - iv. Visitor Website: Officers will evaluate the feasibility of launching a dedicated Hammersmith and Fulham visitor website to serve as a comprehensive resource for tourists. We will also explore other forms of complementary social media.
  - v. Visitor Journey Understanding: To inform our strategies, we will commission data collection and market research to gain valuable insights into visitor demographics.
  - vi. Visitor Feedback: Establish a feedback system that allows visitors to share their experiences and suggestions and enables partners to act on feedback to continually improve their experience.
  - vii. Branding and Promotion: Officers will look to work across the Council – and with external partners - in producing consistent marketing and

messaging strategies that effectively promote the borough. This could include attraction maps, social media improvements/digital advertising as well as local business toolkits.

- viii. Local Resident Engagement: Recognising the role of residents in promoting our events and attractions, we will target this demographic, encouraging them to share their borough experiences with friends and family. While also doing more to promote the current resident schemes in place.

#### *Hotel and conference centre alliance*

17. Officers will explore how best to collaborate with large hotels and conference centres to assist in attracting new conferences to the area, while also equipping them with collateral and training about the local area, including dining options, transportation links, itineraries, and other points of interest. This workstream could improve public knowledge of the area, boosting footfall, increasing bed stays and revenue per stay.

#### *Innovative Product Development*

18. Officers will be working with local partners to create new innovative tourism products; these could include the following:
  - i. Tailored Walking Tours/Scavenger Hunt: Designed around historic sites, music history, famous filming locations and our sporting heritage. Such trails could offer a sustainable, accessible, and immersive way to explore the borough.
  - ii. Notable residents' insights: To provide unique local perspectives, we will engage with notable and famous residents, seeking their recommendations to promote the borough effectively.
  - iii. Targeted Tourist Itineraries: By crafting tourist itineraries and days out guides tailored to specific target audiences.
  - iv. Digital Exploration: Investigate the development of using QR codes for historical and cultural locations, enabling digital in-depth insight into our rich heritage 24/7.
  - v. New Events: Scoping ways of curating high-quality events, including local food festivals, buskers' festival and continued support for existing festivals like Off the Rails. This would also involve collaborating closely with our cultural partners to explore new events, aligning with the commitment in our Cultural Strategy to providing diverse cultural experiences for residents and visitors alike.
  - vi. Accessibility and Inclusion: Ensuring that all attractions and events are accessible to people with disabilities and promoting an inclusive environment to welcome a diverse range of visitors.

### *Nighttime Economy Enhancement*

19. Officers across the Council are already working collaboratively to improve our nighttime economy, an important facet of the Visitor Economy, including through developing a strategic nighttime economy plan tailored to Hammersmith and Fulham. These efforts align closely with the Cultural Strategy, emphasising the importance of cultivating a vibrant and secure nighttime economy.

### *Al-fresco Dining*

20. Officers will explore opportunities to enrich the local dining and beverage scene within the borough by encouraging and promoting more outdoor dining and drinking options. Any enhancements will also focus on prioritising accessible pavement access for everyone fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment.

### *Borough Collaboration + Zone 2 Marketing Initiative*

21. Inspired by a new initiative launched in Berlin earlier this year, officers are looking to engaged with neighbouring boroughs to establish collaborative efforts aimed at attracting visitors outwards from central London, increasing the footfall and spend in H&F and other 'Zone 2' boroughs. The goal would be to develop innovative products and events, jointly promoting activities and attractions situated in areas outside of central London.
22. This endeavour aligns seamlessly with the overarching objectives of London and Partners in encouraging visitors to explore the wider spectrum of London's offerings. Additionally, we will actively engage with travel journalists/bloggers to feature the diverse attractions and experiences offered by Hammersmith and Fulham.

### **Delivering the workstreams**

23. The workstreams outlined above combine activities already in train and those requiring further scoping/development. An outline delivery plan, setting out timescales and anticipated outcomes, is provided at Appendix Two.

### **Conclusion**

24. This report has outlined the emerging approach to developing, promoting, and managing the visitor economy in Hammersmith and Fulham with a focus on increasing footfall, while enhancing the overall visitor experience and fostering economic growth.
25. While the industry is slowly improving following the pandemic, H&F has a great offer and opportunities to gain a better market share of visitors to the area. The report, along with alignment with the Industrial and Cultural

Strategies, shows how the borough is poised to position itself as an attractive and sustainable destination.

26. Subject to Members' comments, next steps will be to continue to deliver the activities already in train and develop those proposed in more detail.



## Appendix One - Hammersmith and Fulham outline tourism proposition

Theme	Details	Attractions
Cultural Hub	Showcasing the borough's cultural and entertainment scene, with venues hosting world-class performances, concerts, and shows. This draws in both local and international visitors, making Hammersmith and Fulham a hub for arts and entertainment.	Bush Hall, Lyric Theatre, Riverside Studios, BBC, ITV studios, Kings Rd Festival, Olympia London, Fulham Palace, Civic Campus
Green Spaces and Parks	Highlighting the borough's parks, gardens, and green spaces as havens for relaxation, recreation, and community events. While also focusing on leveraging the borough's prime location along the river Thames which provides picturesque views, riverside walks and dining.	Ravenscourt Park, Bishops Park, Hammersmith Bridge, Riverside Walk
Shopping, Dining and Accommodation	Showcasing the borough's vibrant culinary scene, including local eateries, street food markets, and food festivals that celebrate diverse cuisines. While also promoting the borough as a shopper's paradise with independent boutique shops, vibrant street markets and large shopping centres. We also want to promote the wide range of accommodation options available to visitors, from budget to high end rooms, all within walking distance to our major attractions.	Westfield Shopping Centre, Shepherds Bush Market, Fulham Broadway Retail Centre, London Olympia, Jerdan Place, Northend road, Novotel, Holiday Inn, IBIS, Hoxton, Premier Inn
Sporting and Leisure Activities	H&F boasts the largest concentration of football stadiums in the city, from Premier League teams Chelsea and Fulham to the iconic QPR in the championship. Each stadium brings in weekly visitors on game days while each also offer stadium tours during the week. The borough also plays host to the cinch Championship at Queens Club which was recently voted 2022 ATP tournament of the year.	Fulham Football Club, QPR, Chelsea, Queens Club, Chesterton's polo in the park, Oxford v Cambridge Rowing Race

## Appendix Two - Outcomes and delivery over the next 12 months.

Workstreams	Delivery	Goals
H&F Tourism Network	6 November 2023	New business to business collaboration. Stronger relationships/collaborations between council and attractions. Quarterly meeting set in place.
Collaboration with visitlondon.com	November 2023	More clicks and visits to H&F pages
Borough Collaboration	New collaborations in place by February 2024.	Collaboration agreements with at least two neighbouring boroughs. Increased footfall and visitor spend.
Nighttime Economy	Plan in place by December 2023.	Increased footfall Business revenue increase.
Shepherds Bush Comedy Festival	Festival launch in Summer 2024.	Increase attendance on 2019. Featured in notable publications. Increased footfall/spend during festival week.
Civic Campus/North End Road Visitor Economy	New initiatives launch Spring 2024.	Increased footfall and expenditure in designated areas. Improved public recognition on area. Increased percentage of out of borough visitors. Positive visitor reviews.
New Product Development	From June 2024	New tours created. Greater footfall/spend in publicised areas.
Hotel and conference centre alliance	February 2024	More conferences held in borough (Long term) Longer hotel stays
Destination Management Plan (DMP)	Draft DMP for consideration December 2024. Ongoing initiatives to begin March 2024.	Three-year strategic direction for the borough.