

Promoting Redditch

Duration of the Review

November 2010 – March 2011

Task and Finish Group Membership

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Date for submission of report

March 2011

Front cover picture

Celebrating Redditch, original piece of art work created by artist Ms Erin Libetta, working with Students of NEW College, unveiled in November 2010. This artwork features on a bus shelter on Windmill Drive, Redditch, was delivered as a community safety project and was designed to celebrate the heritage of Redditch. (© Redditch Borough Council).

Promoting Redditch

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Chair's Foreword

**Councillor Graham
Vickery**



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee determines annually its programme by holding a consultation and discussion forum involving all Councillors and relevant senior Officers. This year's meeting concluded that in view of the current and anticipated challenges to the town's economy it would be timely to conduct a review of the way the town and Council promoted Redditch. This has involved looking at the way we seek to motivate our own residents to use the facilities of the town and attract both business and leisure visitors here, as well as the strategies employed to interest prospective new business and employers to settle here.

We have consequently set out to review our own current practice and seek advice from comparable local authorities, as well as consult with a range of experts, both in house and outside, in the field of promotion and marketing. We have been impressed by the attitude of our consultees which in almost all cases has been very interested and helpful.

However the greatest tribute for this report has to be paid to our principal Officer support, Jess Bayley. Without her single minded commitment to the project we would never have covered so much ground in such a short time, let alone produced such a thorough and professional report.

I hope that Council will agree with us that there are concrete and useful measures which can be adopted without difficulty, in order to increase the prospect of boosting the Redditch economy by cohesive and consistent strategies which will result in our profile being understood as positive, attractive and forward-looking, fit for advancing in the 21st century.

Councillor Graham Vickery
Chair of the Review

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Promoting Redditch

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Introduction

The Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group was established in October 2010 to assess appropriate ways to market the town both to leisure tourists and to businesses.

The review was launched at the request of local Councillors, who were concerned that many people living outside Worcestershire were unfamiliar with the town or had negative perceptions of the Borough. It was felt that these perceptions did not represent a true reflection of the town and could have a detrimental impact on community morale and the local economy.

This Task and Finish review has been short but focussed. Evidence has been gathered from numerous written sources as well as through consultation with a variety of witnesses including: business representatives; tourism and marketing experts; relevant partnership representatives; representatives of other local authorities; local students, community representatives, Borough Councillors; and Council Officers.

The recommendations detailed within this report are designed to enhance the approach that the Council and relevant partner organisations adopt to marketing Redditch to the benefit of the community and the local economy. The Group has attempted to be realistic but ambitious to ensure that any actions resulting from this review have a positive impact on both the community and the local economy. The Group therefore commends this report for urgent approval by the Executive Committee.

Recommendations

We RECOMMEND that

- 1a) Leisure tourism marketing should be targeted at families of all cultures within Redditch and a radius of 20 miles, highlighting the attractions of the Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities;**
- 1b) business marketing should promote Redditch's strategic and rural location, being vibrant and modern and should use strap lines which reflect these images;**
- 2) a significant festival and events programme should be developed and marketed cohesively to raise the profile of the town in the region;**
- 3) promotional material should be developed in partnerships and through Redditch Matters;**
- 4) the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and a public arts programme should be developed with increased management resource to provide increased audiences, more events and significant installations;**

Recommendations

We RECOMMEND that (cont)

- 5) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work to create a more rounded shopping experience in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green, with event based programmes to refresh the offer and a cohesive marketing strategy incorporating recognisable branding, key qualities and identifiers;
- 6) Redditch market should be developed to provide again a substantial marketing strategy for the town centre and develop opportunities for new entrepreneurs;
- 7) the Council should ensure that business promotion receives appropriate investment and provide an information resource fit for purpose;
- 8) the new North Worcestershire Economic Development Service and Strategy should recognise the importance of tourism to the local economy and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the promotion of tourism in the area;
- 9) the need for the promotion of Redditch hotels as a business resource, not necessarily by the Council, should be recognised;

Recommendations

We RECOMMEND that (cont)

- 10) consideration should be given to devising a Visitor Ambassador Scheme;**
- 11) the Council should endorse the Redditch Advertiser's proposal to introduce a Redditch Community Awards programme and should work with the newspaper and other partners to deliver the scheme;**
- 12) the Council ensure that deficiencies in road signage are addressed: location naming, systemic effectiveness and physical cleanliness;**
- 13) the Council should actively seek to establish promotion partnerships and ensure that commercial interests have a full and effective voice; and**
- 14) the Council should ensure that electronic promotion tools are constantly developed and exploited to the full. This should include introducing a virtual business centre consistent provision of card payment facilities both online, in promotional materials and at all venues .**

Background

Review objectives

The Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group was commissioned to address a number of core objectives during the review. These objectives were as follows:

- a) to review the outcomes of the Redditch 'It's My Place' Pride Campaign that was delivered by the Council's Communications team in 2010;
- b) to identify lessons that could be learned from this campaign and previous promotional campaigns undertaken by the local authority;
- c) to scrutinise current approaches to adopting Redditch;
- d) to identify local strengths which created a positive impression of the town;
- e) to identify weaknesses which encouraged negative perceptions of the town;
- f) to assess the appearance of the Borough and the impact of this on perceptions of the town;
- g) to identify at least three key themes to promote in relation to Redditch; and
- h) to identify an appropriate associative image for the town.

To address these objectives the Group needed to develop an understanding of basic marketing principles and how these could be applied to promoting Redditch effectively.

Marketing Considerations

Marketing a Location: Background

At present towns and cities can be marketed at the local, regional, national and international level through a variety of approaches. The focus of the promotional activity may vary according to the strategic objectives of the promoters and the target audience.

Successful place marketing requires detailed consideration of a number of factors including target audience, features that will appeal to the audience, the Unique Selling Points (USPs) of the area and appropriate branding. The brand needs to be carefully selected and utilised to promote the location effectively. “Trying to appeal to everyone or to claim to offer something for everyone almost always results in poor returns on investment. That is why so much attention is paid by companies to distinguishing their brand and their unique selling position (USP) from all others in the market place” (Sunderland City Council, 2010, p 15).

Unique Selling Points (USPs)

The USPs of a location can help to ensure that an area is recognised by a target audience for promotion. The significant aspect of a USP is that it should be original to ensure that the feature is uniquely associated with a particular product. In some instances it can be easy to identify the unique selling point of a location. For example, both Stratford-Upon-Avon and Warwickshire as a county are strongly associated with William Shakespeare. In other locations, it can be difficult to identify any single USP. In these circumstances prior identification of an appropriate target audience can be useful as local selling points can then be identified which will appeal to that target audience.

Target Audience

Choice of target audience for a promotional campaign varies according to context, however, two significant audiences tend to be targeted when promoting a location: Leisure tourists and businesses. Professional marketers further divide these audiences, in a form of market segmentation, when organising a marketing campaign to ensure that the specific campaign appeals to the intended audience. However, both market segments have particular features.

Marketing Considerations

Marketing to the local population

A long-term, strategic approach is required in order to successfully market a location to leisure tourist and business tourist audiences. To begin with it is essential to secure community pride in the location. Local residents live in their town and are more likely to attend events or to participate in activities than external visitors, particularly when these initiatives are first launched. Over time local residents advise friends and family about their experiences and a positive impression of a location can begin to develop.

Leisure Tourism

Leisure tourism involves individuals visiting a location in their leisure time or to participate in a leisure activity. This could involve visiting shops in a particular location, participating in sporting events or local activities and visiting particular attractions based in a location such as a local park or museum.

The group have been advised that the definition of tourism is “any irregular visit away from your regular home for 2 ½ hours or more (Rosemary Sidaway, November 2010). Consequently, leisure tourists comprise both individuals who have travelled from outside the region or country to visit the location and people living in close proximity to the area. Indeed, in Redditch visitors from Bromsgrove or Kidderminster in North Worcestershire, or Studley in Warwickshire, might be regarded as leisure tourists alongside visitors who have travelled further distances to visit the town.

Business Tourism

Business tourism involves individuals visiting a location for business purposes. Often, business tourists will be visiting a location to participate in a conference or meeting, though may also be participating in outdoor events and corporate events or staying at a location when travelling on business.

Business tourists can make an important contribution to a local economy. Business tourism expenditure exceeded leisure tourism expenditure for the first time in 2001. By 2005 Telford and Wrekin Council estimated that business tourists spent 2-3 times more than leisure tourists and

Marketing Considerations

Business Tourism (cont)

would continue to make significant contributions to the local economy outside peak times for tourism. (Telford and Wrekin Council, 2005, p 6).

Business tourists will have a number of considerations when determining whether to visit a location. As part of this process the facilities available at a location will be assessed including parking, public transport, IT accessibility, access to the motorway network and accommodation. It is useful to undertake a gap analysis to identify potential weaknesses when promoting a location to businesses to ensure that areas that might deter business tourism can be addressed.

Marketing to Businesses

The potential to market destinations on behalf of businesses that are located within the area or to companies considering relocating to the area should not be confused with business tourism. The local economy benefits when businesses are established in a local area both with regards to the financial contributions that those companies make to the local economy and in relation to the employment opportunities that are made available to residents. Furthermore, promoting businesses that are already based within a town can help to raise the profile of those companies and the products and services that they provide, thereby enhancing the market competitiveness of those businesses.

Current Context

Redditch Borough Council - Communications Team

Redditch Borough Council currently has a single Communications Team with 4.5 full time equivalent officers, though this structure is likely to change following implementation of the Communications shared service with Bromsgrove District Council in April 2011. This team communicates the local authority's work and markets Council activities, though also has managed campaigns and publications which are designed to promote Redditch and the town's facilities to local residents with a view to enhancing civic pride. The Council's approach to communications was the subject of a scrutiny review in 2007/08. Following this review a full-time manager, an additional media Officer and a part-time administrative support Officer were introduced to the team. It is the view of the Group that the team has managed to achieve considerably more and proactive marketing as a result.

a) Redditch Matters

Redditch Matters is a magazine which is published by the Council three times per year and is one communications tool which is utilised to promote both Council and wider community activities to local residents. The magazine contains information about Council services and Councillors, though details about community events and local attractions are also provided in the publication. The magazine is delivered to every household in Redditch ensuring that all residents are informed about local activities.

b) Social Media

Like many local authorities the Council has a website www.redditchbc.gov.uk which is utilised to provide local residents, businesses and other interested stakeholders with further information about the Council and Council services. The number of visitors to the Council's website is difficult to ascertain, though the website is regarded a useful tool for communicating Council business to residents and local businesses who might not have the time to visit the Town Hall.

The Council also utilises other forms of social media to inform residents about Council services, including a Facebook profile and a Twitter account, *Redditch Matters*. By February 2011 there were 119 members of the Facebook account and 250 followers of the Twitter account, though it was anticipated that the number of members would increase as the potential uses of social media as communications tools develops.

Current Context

b) Social Media (cont)

Redditch Borough Council has developed specific Facebook groups for particular events, such as the Morton Stanley Festival, which takes place in Morton Stanley Park each year. The large number of members who were attracted to this Facebook group, which was targeted at local young people, indicates that there is the potential to utilise social networking media effectively to promote particular events and activities as and when they occur. The team also manages content for an app, The Big Local App, for the iPhone.

c) Redditch It's My Place Pride Campaign

*"I like the fact that I am 5 minutes from the shopping centre and five minutes from the open countryside and five minutes from the M42 and M5!"
(Member of the public who responded to the It's My Place campaign).*

The Council's Communications Team has also helped to organise and deliver campaigns that are designed to enhance civic pride. One such example was the Redditch It's My Place pride campaign which was delivered in 2010 in response to the Comprehensive Area Assessment that was published in 2009 and which awarded a red flag to the town for low educational attainment and health inequalities. To address the concerns raised in relation to the red flag it was considered important to ensure that Redditch residents retained pride in their town.

The aim of the campaign was to improve perceptions of Redditch, to promote the many excellent facilities based within the town, and to raise aspirations amongst local residents.

The campaign was promoted using a mixture of traditional advertising techniques, such as posters and magazine articles, and social networking techniques. It was estimated that 90 per cent of local residents were exposed to campaign materials. The response received from local residents was largely positive, indicating that there was pride in the town amongst the local community and a wish to express that enthusiasm for the place where they live.

The campaign was also noticed by a number of local and regional media sources and discussions of the campaign helped to promote the positive aspects of the town outside the Borough. The value of the press coverage generated by this campaign was assessed to be the equivalent of editorial coverage that would have cost approximately £8,200 in advertising. As a consequence of this wider coverage it is estimated that the campaign reached approximately 538,000 people.

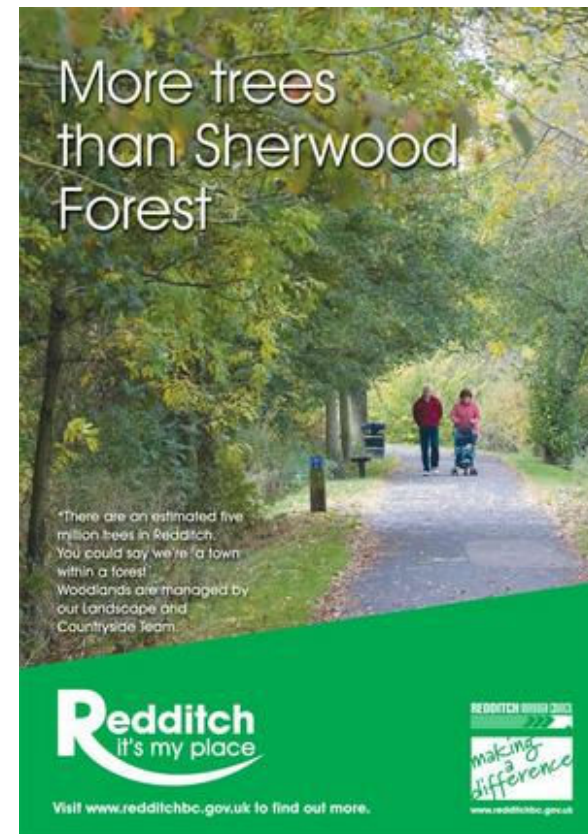
Current Context

c) Redditch It's My Place Pride Campaign (cont)



The It's My Place Pride Campaign was widely advertised using a variety of media, including posters (right).

Promotional goods, including T-shirts, were produced to help advertise the It's My Place pride campaign (left).



Current Context

Redditch Borough Council - Economic Development Unit

The Council currently has a single Economic Development Unit and 2.68 full time equivalent staff. However, it is intended that this unit will combine with the Economic Development teams at Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council in 2011. It is hoped that this will have a beneficial impact on the level of resources available to support economic development in the town.

One of the roles of the unit is to contribute to activities that will help to promote the town and the facilities available within the town to businesses as well as Redditch based businesses. This has been undertaken in a variety of ways.

a) Redditch Gifts

Redditch Gifts is a document which the Council's Economic Development Unit and partner organisations were in the process of developing as a promotional tool when the Group considered the issue in November 2010. The document was designed to address negative perceptions of Redditch and to promote the assets, or 'gifts', specific to Redditch. It is intended that both the Council and other local organisations, such as commercial property agents and tourism bodies will utilise *Redditch Gifts* to promote a more positive image of the town.

b) Redditch Guide for Business

The *Redditch Guide for Businesses* was published in 2010. The guide contains information which is designed to advise both established businesses and new businesses based in the town about the area, and to promote the business opportunities and facilities available within the town that could be used to help improve business performance. The feedback that has been received from businesses about the guide has been largely positive and the Council's Economic Development Unit intends to produce a further, updated version in approximately 18 months.

c) Youth Awards

The Unit is in the process of organising a Young Entrepreneurs Award. This scheme is designed to promote local young entrepreneurs and local enterprise and to provide assistance to a successful individual who will be awarded a £1,000 support grant.

Current Context

c) Youth Awards (cont)

The Economic Development Unit has also supported local groups participating in other youth awards programmes such as the Prince's Trust Awards and aims to help promote the activities of local youth organisations through this process. As such, in 2010 the Council provided financial assistance to local XL Clubs based in Redditch schools. The Kingsley High School XL Club delivered a 'Working Together' project in the Matchborough ward which was subsequently nominated for a Prince's Trust Award.

d) Osprey House

The Economic Development Unit has helped to promote Osprey House, a branch of NEW College which was officially opened in Redditch in December 2010. This branch of the college will enhance the higher education opportunities, including through the introduction of University level qualifications, available to students in the town.

e) Commercial Property Agents

In February 2011 a meeting of local Commercial Property agents took place in Redditch. The meeting provided these companies and property developers with an opportunity to discuss ways to promote Redditch and the facilities available in Redditch to businesses. As part of this process a company has been recruited to produce promotional materials such as folders, leaflets, banners and print adverts and have been asked to complete this work by 31st March 2011. The Group urges the Council to ensure that their report and recommendations are considered by these consultants during the course of their work.

Current Context

Redditch Town Centre Partnership

In recent years the Council and relevant partner organisations have recognised that Redditch town centre is not sustaining a vibrant economy. The Redditch Town Centre Partnership was established in 2010 to address concerns about the town centre and to implement the short, medium and long-term plans to develop the town centre outlined in the *Redditch Town Centre Strategy*. There has been no budget allocated to the work of the partnership and whilst an Officer from Redditch Borough Council co-ordinates the work of the partnership, and many local business, marketing and retail representatives are members of the partnership, there is no specific Town Centre Manager. The efficient working of the Partnership and impact of partnership activities is therefore dependent on the skills and enthusiasm of Partnership members.

In the short duration of the Redditch Town Centre Partnership's existence members have focussed upon identifying the challenges facing the town centre and identifying ways to resolve these problems. The following areas have been identified as particular challenges that will need to be addressed in order to improve the appeal of Redditch town centre:

- a) there is limited footfall in the town centre outside the Kingfisher Shopping Centre;
- c) the lack of footfall deters other retailers from opening branches outside the shopping centre;
- d) there is a perception that the retail offer in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre is dated;
- e) the retail offer available in the town is not suitable for the modern shopping experience (e.g. clothes, independent shops, antiques, cafes and restaurants). ;
- f) the market is decreasing in size;
- g) the products available at the market are not particularly diverse or competitive;
- h) there are limited parking opportunities available for office workers;
- i) there is a limited amount of office space available for businesses;
- j) there is a visible lack of an evening economy in the town centre;
- k) despite positive safety statistics for the town, parts of the town centre, particularly around Church Green, are considered to be unsafe at night; and

Current Context

Redditch Town Centre Partnership

k) the town lacks the cafes, restaurants and bars that are conducive to the type of café culture which is particularly appealing to young professionals.

The Redditch Town Centre Partnership has recognised that many of the problems with Redditch town centre will take time and long-term commitment of resources to resolve. However, some actions have already started to be taken to resolve these problems. Indeed, during the Christmas period in 2010 a programme of events, organised by the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, was delivered in the town centre. This programme was designed to increase footfall in the town centre during the festive season and consisted of various activities including performances by the local Youth Theatre in the town centre and provision of a Hog Roast in the market area.

Redditch town centre, Church Green East (right)



Evidence Gathering

External Reports – Hartlepool Borough Council, Sunderland City Council and Telford and Wrekin Council

Local authorities in other parts of the country have recognised the importance of promoting the local area to enhance civic pride and generate income that will have a beneficial impact on the local economy and have consequently reviewed this subject as part of their own scrutiny processes. The reviews conducted by three local authorities, Hartlepool Borough Council, Sunderland City Council and Telford and Wrekin Council, were considered to be particularly important because these locations were aiming to tackle similar negative perceptions about their locations.

Hartlepool Borough Council's review *The Marketing of Hartlepool* had been launched to assess how the town could utilise the Tall Ships event that took place in the Hartlepool in 2010 to promote the town. The report had demonstrated that hosting events had the potential to attract leisure tourists to the town, though the appropriate infrastructure was required to support these events.

Sunderland City Council, *Tourism and Marketing in Sunderland Policy Review 2009/10*, had identified that one of the main obstacles to promoting the city were the negative perceptions of the location. To address these negative perceptions Sunderland City Council had concluded that it was important to ensure that local people were involved as leisure tourists, through being invited to participate in local events and activities. Over time, residents would inform friends and family about their positive experiences and new visitors would begin to be attracted to the town.

Sunderland City Council also had a number of smaller tourist attractions which the Council struggled to market separately because these attractions could not offer an experience for the day. However, Councillors in Sunderland had concluded that a tourist trail, which would involve promoting these attractions together, would potentially address this problem and create a more appealing offer for leisure tourists.

Evidence was sought from Telford and Wrekin Council because the local authority represented another new town, though the Council had also completed a review, *Tourism*, in 2005/06. This

Evidence Gathering

External Reports – Hartlepool Borough Council, Sunderland City Council and Telford and Wrekin Council

evidence demonstrated that Telford had utilised the opportunities provided to a new town, in terms of urban design and associations with modernity, and had focussed upon the contribution that business tourism can make to the local economy. As part of this process Telford had developed a marketing strategy which was directed towards promoting the town's conference facilities and in 2005/06 employed a dedicated Conference Team.

Telford and Wrekin Council also conceived a local tourism ambassadors scheme, designed to help promote the town's conference facilities outside the district. The programme was managed by the Council's Conference Team and funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Advantage West Midlands. Telford Councillors had proposed that the scheme should be extended to encompass three tiers of ambassador: front line service operatives who had regular contact with residents and visitors and who could convey information about local events to their customers; senior Council Officers who could distribute information about the area and business opportunities when attending external conferences; and a high-profile individual who would be invited to represent the town and raise the profile of the location. Unfortunately, the Group has been advised that this scheme was not eventually delivered, though tourism ambassadors continue to be recruited to represent different sectors of the local economy in Telford.

Chorley Smile Campaign

Many local authorities have already successfully organised marketing campaigns to promote the area they represent. The Chorley Borough Council-led Smile Campaign was one example of this successful approach to marketing which was considered by the Group.

Chorley had at one time had an anonymous image, largely shaped by the perceptions that many people held of the location as a new town. An effort had been made to alter this perception of the town through the launch of the Chorley Smile Campaign, which was launched in 2007 and designed to encourage residents to feel proud about their Borough. As such, the focus of the campaign was on promoting the strengths of the town to the local community.

Evidence Gathering

Chorley Smile Campaign

Local people were encouraged to contribute to improving the Borough and perceptions of the area through various different actions, such as cleaning litter and increasing recycling rates. A number of initiatives were launched as part of the scheme. For example, Chorley Smile Weeks of Action were organised to enable groups of residents to tackle fly tipping or safety issues, community picnics, open to all residents, were held in the local park and residents were invited to sign Pledge Cards declaring their support for the objectives of the campaign and for the Borough.

The Council also organised a system of Community Awards, which took place every two years and were designed to recognise the achievements of residents who had made a significant contribution to the local community. The process was organised so that the awards were presented during a community picnic in the park, and consisted of a variety of categories, such as outstanding sporting achievement.

The campaign demonstrated the importance of consistent branding, as the Smile campaign's logo appeared in all campaign literature and in the naming conventions utilised to describe events that were organised as part of the campaign including festive activities such as the Chorley Smile Christmas Lights Switch on event.

The impact of the campaign on civic pride within Chorley appears to have been overwhelmingly positive and the campaign objectives appear to have been met. A recent evaluation of the scheme identified that the number of residents who had signed pledge cards had increased year on year since the launch of the scheme and significant support had been received from local media, Councillors and Council Officers.

Evidence Gathering

Tourism Experts - consultation

A number of experts in the field of tourism and marketing were consulted during the course of the review to enable the Group to develop an understanding of both the opportunities available to further promote Redditch and the challenges that would need to be tackled.

Mrs Rosemary Sidaway, Rockford Consulting

Mrs Sidaway currently operated her own consultancy company, though she was also the chair of the Redditch Town Centre Partnership and had developed relevant expertise in her former role as a Tourism Officer at Bromsgrove District Council. She had also helped to establish North East Worcestershire Tourism (NEWT), a partnership comprising representatives of bodies based in north Worcestershire which worked to promote the north of the county. (This partnership has recently been re-launched as North Worcestershire Tourism, following a formal merger with the Wyre Forest Tourism Board). Much of the evidence provided by Mrs Sidaway informed the Group's understanding of basic marketing principles. (Please refer to pp– to view further information about these basic marketing principles).

The Group was advised that there were many features within Redditch that could be more effectively promoted, though there was no single unique selling point for the town. In particular, the many parks and green open spaces based in the town could be more widely promoted, and the arts, both performing arts at the Palace Theatre and visual arts displayed in the town, could be more effectively promoted to help develop a more positive image of the town. Mrs Sidaway suggested that the town's music heritage, in the form of musicians such as John Bonham, could be utilised when marketing the town.

However, the Group was advised that the town's industrial heritage, in the spring, fishing tackle and needle industries, was unlikely to appeal to leisure tourists, particularly visitors who live outside the Borough. Moreover, negative perceptions of drug and alcohol abuse in the town centre and perceptions that the Redditch road system was confusing were likely to deter visitors.

Evidence Gathering

Mrs Rosemary Sidaway, Rockford Consulting

Nonetheless, there were a number of opportunities that the Group were advised could be explored in Redditch, to the benefit of the local economy and civic pride. A defining event held in the town could help people, especially external visitors, to develop a more positive image of the Redditch. The town also had the potential to host smaller conferences and meetings in both local hotels and in the Room Upstairs at the Palace Theatre. The close proximity of Redditch to the NEC and Birmingham was similarly considered to be an asset and it was suggested that Redditch based hotels might be promoted to both business and leisure tourists visiting those locations, to the benefit of the local economy.

Councillor Sir William Lawrence Bt

Councillor Sir William Lawrence Bt is the current Chairman of Stratford-On-Avon District Council, the former Chair of the Heart of England Tourism Board and Chair of the Heart of England in Bloom competition. Furthermore, Councillor Lawrence was involved in undertaking a scrutiny review of tourism at Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Under these circumstances, the Group recognised that Councillor Lawrence's expertise in the field of tourism and in the implications of tourism for local government.

The Group were advised by Councillor Lawrence that in general Redditch was largely defined as a new town by individuals living outside the Borough. The town did have a unique selling point, the location of Redditch in the centre of the country close to local motorway networks and to the Birmingham conurbation. This was considered to be particularly appealing to businesses and business tourists.

The Group was advised that numerous events took place in the Stratford-on-Avon district, including the Bulldog Bash that was attended by motorbike enthusiasts, events such as a game fair in the grounds of Ragley Hall, street fairs, and a water festival on the River Avon. Events had the potential to attract visitors and could have a positive impact on the local economy as visitors would utilise other facilities whilst attending an event. However, local shops and hoteliers had not always

Evidence Gathering

Councillor Sir William Lawrence Bt

benefited from shorter events and activities, particularly when these took place outside the town centre and businesses could have concerns about the potential for anti-social behaviour to occur during the course of street fairs.

The Group was also advised that whilst the town benefited from associations with William Shakespeare, the appeal of Stratford-Upon-Avon as a leisure tourist destination had decreased in the past 50 years, from one of the top two destinations to one of the top 100 destinations to visit in the country. Under these circumstances, a location could not rely on an established heritage to sustain interest in the leisure tourism industry.

The potential appeal of visiting Redditch to Stratford district residents was discussed in some detail and it was agreed that both the shopping and the sporting facilities available within the town were likely to appeal to residents living on the borders of the borough, particularly in Studley and Mappleborough Green. However, the shopping and sporting facilities based in Stratford-Upon-Avon town centre and in Leamington Spa, both located within Warwickshire, were considered to be more desirable shopping locations for residents living further into Stratford district. Moreover, the location of a number of speed cameras on the access route between Redditch and Alcester was considered likely to deter Stratford residents from visiting the Borough.

Councillor Lawrence questioned the appeal of Redditch hotels to leisure tourists intending to visit Stratford-Upon-Avon, as he suggested that there were adequate hotel facilities available in Stratford-Upon-Avon which were more likely to appeal to visitors through convenience. However, whilst Councillor Lawrence recognised that the Redditch road system had a negative image outside the Borough, including amongst residents in Stratford-On-Avon district, he suggested that these impressions were based on experiences that had occurred 20 years previously prior to a significant number of improvements having been made to the Redditch road system. Under these circumstances, the challenge would be to raise awareness of the positive aspects of the road system amongst people living outside the Borough.

Evidence Gathering

Destination Worcestershire –Mr Simon Tipple

Mr Simon Tipple is the current manager of Destination Worcestershire, the official county tourism partnership in Worcestershire. The Partnership was established in 2006/07 with the objective to ensure that there could be a co-ordinated approach to destination marketing across Worcestershire, that would avoid duplication in the use of resources across the county.

The Group was advised that the work of Destination Worcestershire is designed to promote members of the partnership. In order to achieve this representatives of the partnership worked with member organisations, tourism officers and Town Partnerships to promote the interests of member organisations. A membership fee was required to join Destination Worcestershire, though the fee varied according to the size of the organisation. Whilst there were currently 141 members of the partnership and the membership was reviewed on an annual basis, few Redditch businesses had become members of Destination Worcestershire. Consequently, Redditch attractions did not tend to feature in the partnership's promotional literature.

The Group was advised that Destination Worcestershire tended to focus on promoting themes rather than specific sectors, as many people considering visiting a destination were more interested in finding out about a total package for a trip, rather than specific elements such as hotels or restaurants. The theme based approach to promotion also indirectly had a positive impact on the local economy as people would choose to visit local shops and tourist attractions that had not been promoted as part of the package whilst they were in the area.

Mr Tipple confirmed that Redditch had a number of assets which could be utilised more effectively to attract leisure tourists to visit the town. This included the central location of the town, the shopping facilities, the Palace Theatre, and the hotels located in the town. Furthermore, the town had the infrastructure to host a number of events and festivities which could attract leisure tourists to visit the town.

Evidence Gathering

Destination Worcestershire –Mr Simon Tipple

Redditch has a more natural appeal to the population of the conurbation rather than the shire counties. It is therefore appropriate to consider targeting leisure tourism marketing at south Birmingham and Coventry for example.

The use of events to develop a more positive image of a destination as a tourist destination required careful organisation and effective marketing. Increasingly, in order to attract both media and public interest an event needed to be distinctive to the locality and quirky. For example, the Pershore Plum festival attracted 17,000 visitors and generated extensive press interest in 2010. Whilst an event might focus on a particular subject, there was the potential to provide a wider offer during an event to ensure that there was an appeal to different interests.

Business Experts – Consultation

The Group recognised the contribution that companies make to the local economy and that the needs and experiences of businesses and business tourists would differ from leisure tourists. Consequently, three different representatives were consulted together during an interview in January 2011: Mr Dean Attwell, Managing Director of Oakland International (a logistics company specialising in the distribution of food and consumer goods); Mr Alistair Hayward-Wright, Director of Hayward Wright Accountants; and Mr Gary Woodman, Head of Policy and Education at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. The location of Hayward Wright Accountants in the town centre ensured that Mr Hayward-Wright could provide a business perspective on behalf of companies based in the town, whilst the location of Oakland International Ltd's British headquarters in Bromsgrove district enabled Mr Attwell to convey an external business perspective of the location.

The Group was advised that the town had a number of assets which meant that conducting business in Redditch was an attractive proposition. Redditch was considered to be ideally located within the centre of the country and the close proximity of Redditch to central motorway networks was an asset to the town from a business perspective. Similarly the lack of congestion on the Redditch road system was convenient for local businesses. Significantly, unlike Bromsgrove, it was

Evidence Gathering

Business Experts – Consultation

reported that external business contacts were aware of Redditch and where the town was located and this contributed to the efficient conduct of business.

However, there were a number of areas of concern to businesses which needed to be addressed. For example, it was suggested that, whilst the Redditch road system was convenient, the signage displayed on the Redditch road system could be confusing and was not always regularly cleaned. As a consequence of this there were often delays to business meetings and deliveries. There were no conferencing facilities based in the town that were considered large enough to host large conferences and meetings, so that frequently business meetings took place utilising facilities available outside the Borough. Disappointment was also expressed in the limited availability of quality restaurants, so business meals often had to take place at venues located outside the Borough.

A significant proportion of the local population are young people and skilled workers who have become unemployed in recent years. Unfortunately, whilst businesses were willing to employ Redditch residents, concerns were expressed about the public transport facilities available to enable residents to attend work, particular if the employee would be required to work in areas located outside the town centre or to commit to shifts outside normal working hours.

The role of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce in supporting and promoting local businesses was considered to be important to successful business promotion. The focus of the Chamber of Commerce's activities had altered over the past four years to consider the needs of businesses outside the main cities and across the whole of the county, including Redditch. As a membership body the focus of the Chamber was on promoting the needs and achievements of member companies, which comprised 1,300 members by February 2011. 62 Redditch based businesses were recorded as members of the Chamber of Commerce in the *West Midlands Chamber Members Directory 2010/11*, though 39 companies were recorded as being

Evidence Gathering

Business Experts - Consultation

Mr Alan Ottey, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

members of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The experience of business representatives in relation to working with the Chamber of Commerce had largely been positive, and it was suggested that members were most likely to gain advantages from membership through actively participating in membership activities.

To address the specific problems identified in Redditch town centre, and the potential contribution that the town centre could make both to the local economy and to developing a more positive view of the town, the Group considered that it was important to consult an expert in the field of town centre management. As such, due to his success in raising the profiles of Nuneaton and Bedworth Mr Alan Ottey, Town Centres Manager at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council was invited to provide evidence.

The appeal of the town centres had been central to improving perceptions of Nuneaton and Bedworth over the past six years. In Nuneaton, the market was regarded as the unique selling point for the town, and it had been awarded Market of the Year status in a national market awards process in 2009 and 2010. A programme of street entertainment and public art took place in Nuneaton alongside the market between spring and the end of the year and was designed to appeal to families. It was important to ensure that this street entertainment was distinctive and eye catching, in order to attract public interest. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council had also determined that street entertainment should take place on the same day of the week throughout the year. This ensured that the public would associate that day with street entertainment, and it was hoped that this would encourage people to visit the market at that time.

Local businesses, including the market, had benefited from the street entertainment which had encouraged an increase in trade on the day when the street entertainment was taking place. Indeed, the reputation of the market had expanded considerably, and regular coach trips and bus routes had been introduced that enabled visitors from Leicestershire and the West Midlands to visit

Evidence Gathering

**Mr Alan Ottey,
Nuneaton and
Bedworth Borough
Council**

Nuneaton market on street entertainment days. Under these circumstances, whilst it was anticipated that the budget available for town centre activities, currently £12,000-13,000 for street entertainment, would be reduced in 2010/11 it was hoped that it would be possible to secure sponsorship from local businesses to continue street entertainment activities in the town centre.

During the course of his visit to Redditch Mr Ottey reviewed the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the town centre in the form of a 'First Impressions' assessment exercise. He concluded that the unique selling point for Redditch was that it provided an urban offer in a rural setting. Numerous positive features had been identified upon arrival in the town including: Redditch town centre was clean; the market area in the town centre was a useful space in which to host street entertainment; much of the town centre appeared to have been pedestrianised; a visitor felt safe; the Kingfisher Shopping Centre provided a reasonable shopping experience; the people of Redditch had been friendly and welcoming; and the location of NEW College in the centre of the town ensured that there was both an educational offer and a youth presence in the town centre.

However, unfortunately a number of negative features were identified, including: the pedestrian street signs, which were not prominently situated and difficult to use due to the black background provided; the signage provided at the bus station, which was considered to be confusing for visitors; and the lack of catering facilities in the town centre. These issues would need to be addressed in order to improve the visitor experience in the town centre.

Evidence Gathering - Community Engagement

Community Engagement

Community Engagement formed a significant part of the review. It was considered important to gain an understanding of public perceptions of Redditch.

Focus Group – NEW College Students

As part of this process a focus group, comprising 20 mature students from NEW College who lived in Redditch, Birmingham and Bromsgrove District, was consulted in January 2011. To ensure impartiality the Focus Group was organised and facilitated by NEW College on behalf of the Group.

In general, the Redditch residents who participated in the focus Group provided much more positive feedback about the town than the students who lived outside the Borough. In particular they reported satisfaction with: the safety of the Kingfisher Shopping Centre; the Redditch road system, which was considered easy to use and well maintained; the town's parks; NEW College; the availability of youth activities and the local young people who were considered to be friendly and intelligent. Unfortunately, non-Redditch residents were concerned that: the Redditch road system was confusing; the shopping centre was less appealing than shopping centres based in other parts of the country; the estates in Redditch were perceived to be dangerous; and Redditch residents were considered to be parochial. There was, however, consensus that Redditch should aspire to have an improved town centre and sporting facilities and should be promoted as a clean, safe, youthful and family friendly town.

Redditch Budget Jury

The Redditch Budget Jury, comprising a membership of local Redditch residents, was also consulted during the course of the exercise. Unfortunately, only two members of the Budget Jury, both young men aged in their early twenties, were able to attend the Budget Jury meeting and as such the evidence they provided could not be considered representative of the wider community perspective. However, the Budget Jury members confirmed that the town's parks, greenery, safety record and NEW College were all considerable assets for the town. They agreed that more attempts could be made to promote the Morton Stanley Festival and the town's musical heritage.

Evidence Gathering - Community Engagement

Local Democracy Day 2010

During the Course of the Local Democracy Day Event in October 2010 local students, aged 13-18, from Arrow Vale High School, Pitcheroak School and Trinity High School were asked to complete a questionnaire: what you like and dislike about living in Redditch. The feedback provided in the 47 questionnaire responses that were received were considered by the Group.

The majority of respondents were happy or satisfied with Redditch as a place to live. Many students commented that the following features were positive aspects of the town: the BMX Track and Skate Park; the local Apollo Cinema; the local parks; the public artwork displayed in the town; the friendly local community; the Palace Theatre; the Kingfisher Shopping Centre; the fact that Redditch was a quiet and peaceful location and the mixed communities living in the town. Unfortunately, students reported that they had some concerns about: the amount of activities available for young people; negative perceptions of young people; the levels of anti-social behaviour in the area; and the levels of the litter and graffiti in the area.

Borough Tenants Panel

The Chair of the former Redditch Borough Tenants' Panel, Mr Michael Chawner, also submitted evidence for the consideration of the Group on behalf of the Panel. In this evidence the Arrow Valley Lake, the greenery visible in the town and surrounding countryside, the local woods and water features, the Skate Park and BMX Track, the Palace Theatre and the local shops were all identified as positive features to the town.

Borough Councillors

Local Borough Councillors were also consulted as representatives of their local communities about the positive aspects of the Borough that appealed to different generations and businesses. Unfortunately, only five Councillors responded to a survey submitted on behalf of the Group. However, many of the comments submitted by Councillors corresponded with suggestions raised by members of the public consulted during the review. The Skate Park and BMX Track were considered to be particularly appealing to younger residents, whilst the good health services, the Dial-a-Ride and Shopmobility services were considered to be useful facilities for older residents. A

Evidence Gathering – Community Engagement

Borough Councillors number of aspects were considered to have general appeal to all generations, including the local greenery, the parks, the Palace Theatre and the location of Redditch in the centre of the county close to local transport networks.

Summary Significantly, the majority of residents consulted during this review reported that they were proud of Redditch and were keen to address negative perceptions of the town. As part of this process there was support for further actions being taken to promote the town, including by Redditch Borough Council.



The 12 panels of the Paolozzi mosaics are community assets which are on public display in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre (left)

Findings

Strengths

By the end of the review a number of Redditch features had consistently been identified, during consultation, as positive assets which were suitable for promotion. This included the following:

- the greenery visible in Redditch;
- the parks, woods and water features in the town, especially the Arrow Valley Lake and park and Morton Stanley Park;
- the Skate Park and BMX Track, which were considered to be attractions for young people;
- the location of NEW (North East Worcestershire) College in the town centre;
- the central location of Redditch and close proximity to the motorway network and Birmingham as well as to the countryside;
- the local community are often considered to be friendly and welcoming;
- the Palace Theatre;
- Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordersley Abbey
- the town's industrial and medieval heritage, with links to the fishing tackle, spring and needle industries as well as to the Knights Templar in Feckenham, was considered to be a source of pride;
- the town's music heritage;
- Redditch was the leading exporter in the West Midlands in 2010.
- the Apollo Cinema;
- the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and district shopping centres;
- the Dial-a-Ride and Shopmobility services and the general accessibility of facilities to individuals with disabilities;
- the local health services, particularly the local Alexandra Hospital;
- public art, especially the Paolozzi mosaics displayed in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre;
- horse riding, golf, the Abbey Stadium and other sporting facilities;
- local clubs and organisations;
- pubs, clubs and restaurants located in the town; and
- the Redditch road system, which local residents and businesses praised particularly due to the limited amount of congestion on the roads.

Findings

Weaknesses Unfortunately, expert witnesses and members of the public also identified a number of features which were believed to have a negative impact on perceptions of the town.

The following issues were consistently raised as weaknesses for Redditch:

- Redditch appeared to have a fairly anonymous image;
- many people's perceptions of Redditch had been influenced by the negative stereotype images often associated with new towns (there was limited recognition of the town's medieval and industrial heritage);
- parking restrictions for Office workers;
- visitors have expressed disappointment with the shopping facilities available within the town centre;
- the market in the town centre and the competitiveness of local market stalls;
- the limited footfall in the town centre outside the Kingfisher Shopping Centre
- perceptions that public transport was expensive in the town;
- the limited awareness of the level of facilities available in the town, particularly amongst young people;
- the limited appeal of the town's industrial heritage to external visitors;
- the lack of a major national attraction to encourage leisure tourists to visit the town for a day;
- the limited number of eating establishments, cafes and bars in the town centre conducive for the café culture that appeals to young people, particularly young professionals;
- the evening economy was considered to be disappointing;
- negative perceptions of community safety and anti-social behaviour, particularly in the town centre, despite positive statistics indicating that Redditch is a safe town;
- the Redditch road system was consistently regarded as confusing by external visitors; and
- the need for signage to be improved for both pedestrian footpaths, on the road system, for Industrial Estates and at the Bus Station.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1a We RECOMMEND that Leisure Tourism marketing should be targeted at families of all cultures within Redditch and a radius of 20 miles, highlighting the attractions of the Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities.

The Group has concluded that, whilst there is no single selling point for Redditch the town has numerous assets that appeal to a family audience. Correspondingly, both the Council and relevant partner organisations should target a family audience, both families who live in Redditch and those who live in surrounding areas, when marketing the town's attractions to leisure tourists.

Marketing attractions and locations to a family audience requires an understanding of the needs of the modern family. In particular, it should be recognised in the 21st Century that families are increasingly complex, often involving an enhanced role for grandparents as well as single parenting and step-parenting arrangements. Families generally require convenience when searching for attractions to visit and considerations about entrance fees, parking availability, toilet facilities and the quality of the food available to purchase on site will influence a family's decision as to whether to visit a location. (For more detailed information about marketing to families please refer to Appendix B).

Furthermore, Redditch has the largest proportion of minority ethnic groups in Worcestershire, representing 8 per cent of the local population by 2009. Asian and Asian British Pakistani groups comprise the greatest proportion of Redditch residents from minority ethnic groups, though there is also a significant Eastern European representation amongst residents. (Redditch Profile, 2009 p 22). The Group believes that the needs and cultural experiences of the minority ethnic groups living in Redditch should be reflected in the leisure tourism offer in the local area and the ways that this offer is promoted to the local community.

Increasingly the structure of a family visiting an attraction will differ from the traditional structure of

Recommendations

Recommendation 1a



“The Arrow Valley Visitor Centre is highlighted in the majority of our public consultation as being the jewel in the Council’s crown which enjoys unbridled public support”, Councillor Carole Gandy, Leader of Redditch Borough Council, Arrow Valley Visitor Centre Prospectus 2010.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1a (cont)

“The lake at the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre is the jewel in the Redditch Crown”.
(Chair of the Borough Tenant’s Panel, November 2010).

two adults and two children that has tended to be reflected in the standard family ticket. Many organisations, such as the National Trust, now offer family tickets that reflect these different family structures and this pay structure can act as an incentive for groups that do not conform to the traditional model to visit that attraction. To meet the needs of modern families the Group is contending that **different payment arrangements should consistently be made available** to families visiting all Redditch based attractions.

There are two particular selling points that the Group agree appeal to families and should be promoted as family friendly destinations in all campaigns designed to appeal to potential leisure tourists: the Arrow Valley Park, Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities available within the town.

The Arrow Valley Park is classified as a regional park and attracts approximately 1 million visitors per year. An external company is contracted to manage the lake and the activities that take place on the lake. At the time of writing the Council is in the process of negotiating a contract for the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. Visitors can participate in nature walks, observe or participate in sporting activities, children can play safely and families can have picnics in the park. The park is within walking distance of 80 per cent of residents and was identified as the most popular tourist destination in Redditch in a Pride of Place Poll, conducted in the Borough in 2007. Furthermore, expert witnesses and residents of all generations consulted during the course of the review identified the park as a key local attraction that appealed to the whole family.

There are numerous shopping opportunities available within the town which should appeal to a family audience. The Kingfisher Shopping Centre, which contains branches from a number of high profile retail outlets, is one of the top 20 largest shopping centres in the country. The Shopping Centre is conveniently located in the centre of the town and can be easily accessed by pedestrians at a variety of entry points, and there are adequate parking facilities available for visitors travelling

Recommendations

Recommendation 1a (cont) to the centre by car. As a central shopping venue the Kingfisher Shopping Centre offers convenience and a safe environment suitable for families when shopping.

There are a number of low cost retail outlets located both in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and in the rest of the town centre. The Group recognises that often there are concerns about the potential impact that low cost retail outlets may have on the competitiveness of the local retail offer, particularly when compared to regional competitors such as the Touchwood Centre in Solihull. However, **the Group believes that these low cost retail outlets can also be considered to be an asset to the town** because they often appeal to a family audience.

There are also a number of smaller district shopping centres located in the town. The Group believes that these shops are particularly useful for families with young children. The convenient location of the district shopping centres close to local housing estates and easy accessibility ensures that young families can access essential goods without having to travel to the town centre. As such, the group believes that the district centre should be marketed as assets for local communities.



The Kingfisher Shopping Centre (left) is located in the centre of the town and offers a family, friendly shopping experience.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1b We RECOMMEND that business marketing should promote Redditch's strategic and rural location, being vibrant and modern and using strap lines which reflect these images.

The Group believes that, to support the economic development of the town, businesses should be another key target audience when promoting Redditch. The needs and interests of businesses differ from the aspects of the Borough that appeal to families. As such, a separate approach to marketing Redditch to businesses should be adopted by the Council and relevant partner organisations.

Redditch in the 21st century has a number of features that appeal to modern businesses. High speed broadband and Wi-Fi access, important for businesses intending to operate effectively in this modern era of information technology, is available in many parts of the town. There are also numerous industrial estates based within the Borough offering office and warehouse space in which to conduct business.

The Group has concluded, though, that there is a unique selling point of Redditch which particularly appeals to companies and should consistently feature in any campaign targeted at businesses: the central location of the Borough. Redditch is located advantageously in the centre of the country close to the M42 and M5, the Birmingham conurbation and Birmingham International Airport, and also to the countryside which represents a significant portion of the south of the Borough. Indeed, business representatives have confirmed that the central location of the town is an incentive for conducting business in Redditch. As such, Redditch can be described as a gateway to Birmingham.

There is often an assumption that the association of Redditch with the location's status as a new town creates negative impressions of the area which need to be addressed through emphasising the town's heritage. However, the feedback that was received from expert witnesses during

Recommendations

Recommendation 1b (cont) the course of the review indicated that there was little interest amongst external visitors in the town's fishing tackle and needle industry heritage. Moreover, Telford, another new town, has demonstrated that by emphasising modern elements of a new town that facilitate effective business it is possible to attract companies to an area to the benefit of the local economy. In these circumstances the Group is contending that the Council should be proud of these modern links and should actively attempt to market a brand for Redditch to businesses which associates the town with economic vibrancy and modernity.

A strap line can often help an organisation to define a brand for a product. The Group is aware that B1, a local creative design agency, was recently contracted by the Council to propose a concept for promoting Redditch. The company has suggested that the phrase "open roads, open countryside, open business" would appeal to businesses. The Group believes that this phrase corresponds with the images that would attract businesses to the area and so should be endorsed.



Numerous modern office units, such as Oak Tree Park (left) have been developed in the Borough which are suitable for the use of businesses.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2

We RECOMMEND that a significant festival and events programme should be developed and marketed cohesively to raise the profile of the town in the region.

During the course of the review the Group has consistently discussed the potential for events and festivals to raise the profile of a location and to enhance civic pride in a town. Evidence gathered from expert witnesses and from the Hartlepool Borough Council review indicate that this represents a legitimate way to raise the profile of a town locally, regionally and, in exceptional circumstances when delivering a high profile event, nationally.

A number of events and festivals already take place in the Borough, some of which are organised by Redditch Borough Council, such as the Morton Stanley Park Festival, and other activities which are organised independently, such as the Astwood Bank Carnival. The Group agrees that there is further potential to develop a much enhanced events programme in the town which would appeal to a family friendly audience. A variety of new opportunities have been identified which could be delivered in Redditch:

- a) a crafts fair displaying both traditional and modern produce manufactured in Redditch ;
- b) a horse fair, which is likely to attract horse enthusiasts from outside the Borough, which could take place in one of the local parks;
- c) a scarecrow festival could be organised to take place in the more rural areas of the Borough;
- d) a dog show, which is likely to attract dog enthusiasts from outside the Borough;
- e) a week-long music festival celebrating the town's music heritage;
- f) subject to working in partnership with an appropriate third sector organisation, a water fiesta on the Arrow Valley Lake;
- g) an event celebrating the historic role of the Knights Templar in Astwood Bank;
- h) a Chinese Dragon boat display or event, which could take place on the Arrow Valley Lake; and
- i) a small-scale three counties show, which could be held in one of the town's parks.

The Group recognises that, as suggested by witnesses with expertise in the tourism industry, any

Recommendations

Recommendation 2 (cont)

event or festival would need to be distinctive in order to appeal to a wide audience. In this respect the activities would need to be original and appropriately marketed to ensure that media interest could be secured and consequently public awareness raised.

Existing events could be developed to appeal to a family friendly audience. For example, Feckenham Wake, a local village fair, takes place every year could be expanded. The fair is organised independently but takes place on Council land. Subject to the agreement of the local community and the WAKE Committee, which organises the fair, the event could be developed further to promote the history of the village.

The Morton Stanley Festival takes place in Morton Stanley Park annually, costs £15,000-20,000 to deliver and largely appeals to an audience of residents aged 24 or younger. There is the potential to expand this festival to ensure that it appeals to all generations of a family audience. For example, a food festival and craft fair section could be introduced as part of the festival activities and it is likely that these sections would appeal to older adults. The enhanced offer at the Morton Stanley Festival could eventually help to raise the profile of the event, both in the Borough and externally, so that eventually the festival might need to move to a more high profile destination.

The Arrow Valley Countryside Centre is probably the most high profile location in Redditch and it would be suitable to hold a prominent regional festival at the park in the long-term. However, there are a number of infrastructure problems at the park. At present, there are no toilets, water, or electricity available outside the countryside centre and these facilities therefore need to be brought on site when delivering events such as the annual fireworks night event in November. Similarly, the town centre, particularly the road system, lacks the infrastructure required to host events and activities. These problems would need to be resolved before a significant festival or event could take place.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2 (cont)



Local musicians and bands currently perform during the course of the Morton Stanley Festival (left).

For example, at present the town is not in the position to host a Redditch Carnival, which according to a traditional model would consist of a procession followed by family friendly activities. There is the potential to hold family friendly activities in the town centre (See pp 48-50) and the Group believes that a revived Redditch carnival would enhance civic pride and represent a useful opportunity to promote the various districts located of the Borough as well as the businesses and community organisations.

Investment would be required from the Council and the local authority's partner organisations to help fund many of the events that have been identified by the Group for delivery in Redditch. In the current economic climate it would be difficult for the Council to commit this level of investment. However, in the long-term it will be important for the Council to address any infrastructure problems at local attractions if the appeal of the attractions based in the town are to remain competitive in the leisure tourism market. The Group recommends the principle of an enhanced festival and events programme in the Borough as an arrangement that the Council and Council's partner organisations should aspire to achieve in due course.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3

We RECOMMEND that promotional material should be developed in partnerships and through Redditch Matters.

Currently Redditch Borough Council utilises the Council's website and magazine, *Redditch Matters*, to inform residents about Council services and local developments (for further information about *Redditch Matters* please refer to pp 9). However, the Group believes that the publication could be further developed to promote Redditch, particularly the events taking place in the Borough.

"Morton Stanley Festival was not widely known of and residents and outsiders alike would have liked to have known about this festival". (Feedback received from the Focus Group, January 2011).

During the course of the review the Group has consistently discussed the possibility of introducing a calendar of Redditch events, which could be utilised to promote forthcoming local events and activities. Worcestershire County Council's Library Service currently produces a guide to community activities in Redditch and Bromsgrove, *Happening – Redditch and Bromsgrove*, which can be accessed on the Council's website. Whilst this publication is informative the focus of the document is on the activities of local social clubs rather than events. The Group is keen to promote the many larger community events that take place in locations across the Borough throughout the year and ideally would prefer for a separate calendar to be produced to promote the events taking place in Redditch. However, the Group recognises that significant expenditure would be required to produce and publish a calendar.

An alternative option, therefore, would be to display a calendar of events in an edition of *Redditch Matters*, either for the year or for the period of time for which that edition of the magazine applied. The potential impact of this calendar could be significant. The distribution of the publication to all households in Redditch would ensure that the majority of residents could be informed about the events that would be taking place in the area and this exposure could help to increase the number of residents participating in particular events and visiting the attractions where those activities take place during the year.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 (cont)

The Group believes that further printed promotional materials should be produced by both the Council and relevant partner organisations to market Redditch. The Group recognises that increasingly local attractions rely on social media and websites for promotional purposes. Websites and social media are relatively cheap to utilise and are useful sources of communication, particularly for people who are unable to access the Town Hall and other town centre facilities during the week. However, these forms of communication are relatively passive and marketers are reliant on the target audience actively choosing to engage with the source of information. Feedback received from students during the Local Democracy Day event and the Budget Jury meeting indicates that young people in particular are unlikely to engage with social media or websites that have been branded as local authority sources of information.

The Group also recognises that the many tourist attractions based within the town would not separately attract leisure tourists to visit the town for the day. However, the Group agrees that Sunderland City Council's suggested model of a tourist trail, linking the many smaller attractions available within the area, could provide an attractive day visit offer to leisure tourists.

In these circumstances, the Group believes that the most effective way to promote a tourist trail of Redditch attractions would be through producing a promotional leaflet which focuses on marketing the places of interest based within the town. A promotional leaflet is not currently produced by the Council or any local partner organisations, though the Group believes that the Council's Communications Team does have the skills required to produce this type of leaflet. An A2 size leaflet, folding into 16 separate sections, could feature a map of the area which would be designed to highlight potential visitor attractions. Particular sections of the leaflet could also focus on specific areas of interest, such as restaurants and cafes based in the town, and a calendar of events could be incorporated into the publication.

It is estimated that it would cost approximately £5,000 to produce and distribute 50,000 copies of a promotional leaflet. (For further information about the costs involved in producing this leaflet please

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 (cont)

refer to Appendix A, p69). The Group recognises that this represents significant investment in the current economic climate. However, the Group believes that this investment would be justifiable because an effective leaflet could have a positive long-term impact on the local economy. Furthermore, in accordance with actions suggested in recommendation 8, the leaflet could be produced by the shared Economic Development Service as part of a process of prioritising investment in tourism. (See recommendation 8, p 54).



A number of events take place throughout the year in the grounds of Forge Mill Needle Museum.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 We RECOMMEND that the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and a public arts programme should be developed with increased management resource to provide increased audiences, more events and significant installations.

Museums, Theatres and the visual arts are all community attractions which appeal to families. In Redditch, the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre are three prominent local attractions which have the potential to attract leisure tourists. The Group believes, however, that the appeal of these attractions as tourist destinations could be enhanced.

The Palace Theatre, built in 1913, retained a traditional theatre interior following a significant refurbishment in 2006. The theatre has a programme of events which attracts a number of plays, stand-up comedians and amateur productions. There is also a space in addition to the main stage, The Room Upstairs, where events and meetings can take place. However, many of the acts secured for the programme could be considered to be mainstream and unfortunately do not currently attract large audiences. The theatre does not, at present, secure a significant level of secondary spend, in the form of bar sales, which would enhance the financial position of the venue.

There is currently no manager of the Palace Theatre and the Group believes that **a manager is required to improve the appeal of the venue**. The Palace Theatre has a larger seating capacity, consisting of 425 seats, than the ARTRIX theatre in Bromsgrove and the traditional interior is conducive to enhancing the atmosphere for theatre performances. As such, the venue has a number of strengths which could be more effectively marketed to secure more popular acts and performances. A manager could ensure that a more commercial approach was adopted to: organising the Palace Theatre's programme, marketing the acts scheduled to perform at the theatre, and managing the bar.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 (cont)

Forge Mill Needle Museum has an established collection of needles, fishing tackle and other artefacts relating to the town's industrial heritage. The museum has a timetable of exhibitions each year, and some of the exhibitions attract significant numbers of leisure tourists, including a Dinosaur exhibition in 2010 which attracted approximately 4,500 visitors. Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre is located in a 16th century barn on the same site as the museum and displays many of the archaeological exhibits that have been identified at the Abbey in previous years. There is a shop situated in the Visitor Centre, which can be hired for functions by external parties.

During the course of the review the Group discovered that the appeal of the museum was constrained by negative preconceptions about the town's industrial heritage and few of the expert witnesses had or intended to visit the museum. Like the Palace Theatre there is currently no manager of Forge Mill Needle Museum or Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre. The Group are contending that a commercial approach to managing both the museum and Visitor Centre would ensure that both venues' collections could be more effectively marketed as an attraction to potential leisure tourist visitors. Due to the close proximity of these two attractions the Group believes that a manager could be appointed to assume responsibility for both the museum and the Visitor Centre.

There are numerous examples of the visual arts in Redditch and public artwork was cited as a source of civic pride by many of the community representatives consulted during the review. The Paolozzi mosaics in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre are regularly identified as a prominent feature in the town centre, whilst the visual arts are also prominently displayed in the Needles Gateway Feature, a depiction of needles that is displayed on Alcester Street in the town centre. Community artwork is similarly on display in the town, such as the Redditch Roadway Arts' projects featured on a number of subways and bus shelters in the town.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 (cont)

The Group believes that more visual art work could be displayed in the Borough. In particular, sculptures produced by local artists could be installed on many of the town's roundabouts, though there is also the potential to display the artwork in other prominent venues such as the Abbey Stadium. Sculptures have successfully been installed on roundabouts located in other parts of the country, such as Telford, indicating that it is possible to meet this objective. The installation of artwork on the roundabouts in Redditch would improve the visual appearance of the roads but would also provide distinctive features that would help visitors to navigate the Redditch road system. Indeed, the Group anticipates that in the long-term a positive outcome of this initiative would be to improve external perceptions of the Redditch road system.

The Group accepts that an established artist or sculptor is likely to require a substantial fee to produce quality artwork that could be installed on the town's roundabouts. Under these circumstances the Group is suggesting that this should be regarded as an opportunity to promote the work of young artists and art students who are studying at local colleges and universities. Young artists will be keen to secure public exposure for their artwork. By working with young artists the Council will potentially help them to launch their careers, though without accruing significant financial costs.

The Group contends that public artwork could also be utilised to convey key messages about the strengths of Redditch. In particular, the areas identified as strengths for the town by both residents and visitors could be depicted in public artwork with a view to reflecting civic pride in features based within the town. Public artwork can also celebrate the heritage of the town. This has already been recognised by groups such as Redditch Roadway Arts, which has produced the artwork utilised for *Celebrating Redditch*, an image which features on a bus shelter located on Windmill Drive in Redditch and on the front cover of this report. However, there remain elements of the town's heritage which could be celebrated further in public artwork, such as the spring industry and the significant music heritage of the town.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 (cont)

During the course of the review the Group were advised that the local authority's Leisure services were in the process of being reviewed as part of the ongoing shared services programme between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council. As part of this process it has been recognised that enhanced management arrangements would be in the commercial interests of the Palace Theatre and Forge Mill Needle Museum. It has also been acknowledged that the delivery of a continuously improving visual and performing arts programme requires the Council to invest in additional resources. The Group recognises the value of these services and the important contribution that these Officers could make to the performance of arts and cultural services in Redditch.

**The Palace Theatre
(right) was built in the
19th century and has
retained a traditional
interior.**



Recommendations

Recommendation 5 We RECOMMEND that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work to create a more rounded shopping experience in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green, with event based programmes to refresh the offer and a cohesive marketing strategy incorporating recognisable branding, key qualities and identifiers.

The Group recognises that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership has already started to attempt to address some of the problems with the town centre identified as weaknesses during the course of the review. In particular, the Group welcomed the Christmas events programme that took place in the town centre in 2010. Furthermore, the Group recognises that it will take time to alter both conditions in the town centre and perceptions of the area and for this reason the long-term plans to improve the location, as detailed in the Redditch Town Centre Strategy, are welcomed.

However the Group believes that there are a number of opportunities that could be delivered relatively quickly. In particular, street entertainment, which could be organised relatively easily to appeal to family audiences, could take place more regularly in the town centre, including the following initiatives:

- a) original fairs, focussing on local crafts or food products, could take place in the town centre;
- b) a brass band could perform in the town centre and at the bandstand located on Church Green;
- c) whilst it would be difficult, with the existing town centre infrastructure, to organise a carnival procession, it would be possible to deliver the type of activities that take place at the end of a town carnival, including the crowning of a carnival queen;
- d) there could be an annual Christmas Lights Switch On event in the town centre; and
- e) activities that involve displaying public art in the town centre.

The example set by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, particularly in Nuneaton town centre, has demonstrated that street entertainment has the potential to attract leisure tourists to the

Recommendations

Recommendation 5 (cont)

area. Indeed, the space available in Redditch town centre, on Alcester Street and in the Church Green area, is much larger than the space available in Nuneaton. Pedestrianisation of Alcester street and Church Green West would increase the potential for street entertainment and activities to take place safely in the town centre. Therefore, in the long-term more ambitious street entertainment projects could be delivered in Redditch town centre.

This programme of street entertainment would require the investment of a certain amount of resources by the partnership, particularly at the launch of the programme. However, the Group believes that the street entertainment would help to encourage an increase in footfall in the town centre, which should lead to a positive impact on custom both in the market and in shopping units located along Alcester Street as well as having a positive impact on custom in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre. In the long-term, as momentum with the street entertainment developed, it might be possible to attract sponsorship to help fund the continuing delivery of the street entertainment.

Additional work would be required to address the negative perceptions that residents have developed about the town centre. In particular, the Group believes that the **Redditch Town Centre Partnership should develop a positive, identifiable brand for the town centre. This brand should emphasise the fact that Redditch town centre is clean, safe, vibrant and friendly.** Perceptions amongst local people that the town centre is dirty or unsafe, especially at night, do not correspond with real circumstances. The Council's waste collection team regularly cleans the town and the statistics for community safety indicate that Redditch is a relatively low crime area and a safe location in which to live. Indeed, expert witnesses visiting Redditch for the first time reported that the town appeared to be clean, safe and friendly. These are all therefore constructive, family friendly images which, if used to promote the town, would address community concerns.

There are particular features in the town centre which could also be promoted to encourage more

Recommendations

Recommendation 5 (cont)

positive perceptions of the town centre. In particular, the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and the Redditch branch of NEW College are both symbols which can be utilised as identifiers of a vibrant town centre. In the long-term the market, based in a prominent central position, could also be used to promote the town centre (see recommendation 6 pp 51-52). In addition, the close proximity of the town centre to the countryside and to local greenery could be promoted as this would help to identify the town with some of the messages aspiring to promote Redditch as an urban offer in a rural setting. (See recommendation 2, pp 38-40).

The Group believes that, as demonstrated by the successful approach of the Chorley Smile Campaign, the town centre brand and the identifiers detailed in this report should be consistently promoted as part of a co-ordinated marketing strategy. To ensure consistency in the way that the town centre was marketed, this brand would need to be adopted whenever the town centre was the subject of a promotional campaign co-ordinated by either the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, Redditch Borough Council or any other local partner organisations. Through this unity in approach it is anticipated that perceptions of the town centre would gradually become much more positive to the benefit of the local economy.

The band stand in the town centre (right) can be utilised during brass band performances.



Recommendations

Recommendation 6 We RECOMMEND that Redditch market should be developed to provide again a substantial marketing strategy for the town centre and develop opportunities for new entrepreneurs.

Unfortunately, the market in the town centre was consistently identified as a weakness due to the decreasing size and limited range of products available at the market. The decrease in size accords with national trends for the size of markets, though the Group was encouraged to learn towards the end of the review that footfall at the market had increased in January and February 2011. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership's plans to assess the appropriate location of the market could help to improve custom at the market. However, negative perceptions of the market are concerning because this may deter custom not just from the market but from shopping units situated in the town centre.

The Group believes that there is potential to develop further the town centre's market. The space available in the centre of the town is significant, and certainly larger than the space available in Nuneaton where the market is a considerable local attraction. This space could be utilised more creatively to attract custom to the market, for example through the delivery of street entertainment. (See recommendation 5 pp 48-50). The Group is contending that in order to exploit the market space and to enhance the commercial viability of the market a specific strategy focussing on developing and promoting the market should be devised by both Redditch Borough Council and the Redditch Town Centre Partnership. This would ensure that all potential opportunities to improve the market could be assessed and a co-ordinated approach could be adopted to managing the market in the long-term.

There is also an opportunity in the short-term to work with the market to develop opportunities for young entrepreneurs. As demonstrated in Nuneaton, managing a market stall might be a young entrepreneur's first opportunity to operate a business and learn how to manage their finances. It may be appropriate for the Economic Development Unit to work with the Council's market team to

Recommendations

Recommendation 6 (cont)

develop a programme that would provide this assistance to young entrepreneurs, although established local business representatives may also be willing to mentor young people in this position.

The Group believes that by developing opportunities for young entrepreneurs working at the market a number of important long-term benefits could be secured. Firstly, it is likely that the range of produce available at the market would diversify as young people might have a fresh perspective about the appeal of particular products and the needs of their target customers. Secondly, these young entrepreneurs could develop the skills necessary to operate a variety of businesses, potentially in the local area. As a consequence, if implemented this scheme could have a positive impact on the local economy.

There is also the option to work with the National Market Traders Federation to address current problems with the market. The Group has been advised that the Federation has provided support to markets in other parts of the country to help address similar problems. The Town Centre Partnership and the Council's market team, in consultation with market traders, could utilise this opportunity to identify reasonable actions that could be taken to improve the market in Redditch.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7

We RECOMMEND that the Council should ensure that business promotion receives appropriate investment and provide an information resource fit for purpose.

The Group recognises that the Economic Development Unit is currently working effectively to promote Redditch businesses and the facilities available in Redditch to businesses. The structure of the Unit is due to change in 2011, because a new Economic Development Team representing Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council will be introduced. As the current capacity within the Council's Economic Development Team is equivalent to 2.68 full-time members of staff, this joint team could have greater capacity to promote and address the business interests of Redditch.

However, there is the risk that the constructive proposals to promote business tourism and Redditch based businesses that are contained within this report could be overlooked following the introduction of this new team due to the complexities involved in supporting three separate local authority areas. The Group, therefore, believes that these proposals must be effectively communicated to this new team and implemented accordingly.

In addition to relevant proposals detailed in relation to recommendations 1b, 6, 8, 0 and 13 the Group contends that there is one opportunity to enhance business competitiveness and the local economy which could be further explored by the Council directly: developing twinning links with an emerging economy. In particular, The Group believes that the town should aspire to develop twinning links with towns located in both India and China. The economies of both countries are rapidly developing and are likely to assume greater prominence in the world economy as the 21st century progresses. As a prominent manufacturer and exporting town in the West Midlands Redditch businesses have already developed a basis for working effectively with business contacts based outside the town. By establishing links with India and China Redditch could further develop this exporting base to the benefit of the local economy.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8 We **RECOMMEND** that the new North Worcestershire Economic Development Service and Strategy should recognise the importance of tourism to the local economy and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the promotion of tourism in the area.

At present there are no Officers directly employed by Redditch Borough Council to support tourism within the Borough, though the Council's Communications and Economic Development Teams help to organise and deliver promotional activities on behalf of the local authority.

The Group believes that the introduction of a shared Economic Development Team, representing Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council, will create opportunities to enhance the contribution of local government to promoting leisure and business tourism in the area. In particular, Officers currently employed by Wyre Forest District Council have already developed expertise in relation to tourism and destination marketing. To ensure that all Councils make best use of the shared service the Group believes that this expertise should be shared and applied to promote leisure and business tourism opportunities across the whole of north Worcestershire to the benefit of the local economy.

As part of the new shared services arrangements the Group recognises that it is likely that a joint Economic Development Strategy will need to be developed at an early stage in order to shape the activities of the team. The Group feels that a commitment should be made to incorporating specific tourism related objectives into this strategy. This will ensure that adequate resources are then allocated to promoting both leisure and business tourism in the north of the county, including Redditch.

Recommendations

Recommendation 9 We RECOMMEND that the need for the promotion of Redditch hotels as a business resource, not necessarily by the Council, should be recognised.

There are numerous hotels in Redditch, which currently provide approximately 850 hotel beds, though the opening of a new hotel in Redditch in 2011 is due to increase the number to approximately 1,000 beds. There are a variety of hotels in Redditch, including some more upmarket establishments capable of holding larger events, such as the Abbey Hotel, the Old Rectory Hotel and the Southcrest Manor Hotel, as well as lower cost hotels which offer the conference facilities and Wi-Fi access suitable for short-stay visits and business tourists.

The Group believes that the location of Redditch in the centre of the country ensures that use of the hotel facilities based in the town should be an attractive offer particularly for business tourists. There is the potential for business tourists to stay in hotel accommodation based in Redditch before travelling to Birmingham, the NEC or Birmingham international Airport on business. The rail links between Redditch and Birmingham ensure that business tourists can travel relatively easily to the city without having to enter the busy road traffic.

The conference facilities and Wi-Fi access available at many of the hotels is similarly an asset which suggests that Redditch hotels should be attractive venues for business tourists. There are no Redditch hotels which could host large conferences of a similar scale to the NEC. However, smaller conferences have been held successfully in Redditch hotels in recent years, including conferences hosted by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. The potential for business tourists to make a positive contribution to the local economy whilst attending these conferences should not be underestimated.

To an extent Redditch hotels are already promoted on company websites and the benefits of being located in Redditch are often recognised by these companies. However, the Group believes that

Recommendations

Recommendation 9 the Council and relevant partner organisations should help to promote the hotels to potential business tourists because, if successful, this could have a positive impact on the local economy. The Group were therefore pleased to learn immediately prior to completing their report that North Worcestershire Tourism are due to publish a guide to accommodation in due course, as this should help to raise the profile of Redditch hotels and Bed and Breakfast establishments.

Recommendations

Recommendation 10

We RECOMMEND that Consideration should be given to devising a Visitor Ambassador Scheme.

Telford and Wrekin Council's concept of a Visitor Ambassador Scheme was admired by the Group who are contending that a similar Visitors' Ambassador Scheme could be delivered in Redditch (For further information about the Telford Ambassador scheme please refer to pp16-17). This scheme would be simpler than the scheme proposed by Telford and Wrekin Councillors but could help to promote Redditch attractions and businesses to local residents, leisure tourists and business contacts.

The Group is proposing that there should be a number of different Ambassadors for Redditch. In the first place local residents could be invited to act as Ambassadors for their local area and to communicate the attractions of the town to friends and family. Whilst the work of the resident Ambassadors would help to promote the town, it is also envisaged that the role would help to encourage civic pride within the local community.

Secondly, local taxi drivers could be invited to act as Ambassadors and to provide information about forthcoming events and activities to both residents and visitors. There are numerous taxi drivers based in Redditch who deliver an efficient service to residents and visitors. The taxi drivers in Redditch would benefit from working in this role as successful promotion of Redditch attractions should help to enhance business for local taxi companies.

In the third place local Borough Councillors and Council Officers could be invited to act as Redditch Ambassadors when performing official duties or attending meetings and conferences. Frequently individuals become Councillors because they want to help the local community. Participation in the Ambassadorial scheme and the potentially positive impact this might have on local businesses and civic pride would represent one way to meet this objective. Training, relating to marketing a location and public relations, could be provided as part of the Council's training programme to help Councillors to assume this role effectively.

Recommendations

Recommendation 10 (cont)

Finally, the Mayor of Redditch and / or the Chief Executive of the Council could be invited to act as lead Ambassadors for the Borough on specific high profile occasions, such as town centre parades. We recognise that both the Mayor and the Chief Executive already have significant roles and busy schedules. The Mayor is a leading dignitary and representative of the town, represents the town and Council at various civic and charitable events and regularly assumes the lead of processions. The Chief Executive similarly regularly attends meetings and events at external locations as a senior representative of the local authority. The Group feels that wherever possible and appropriate the Mayor and Chief Executive should seek to promote the town during these events, through references to local activities, businesses and attractions in speeches and submissions.

The recruitment of residents and taxi drivers as Ambassadors could be a relatively simple process, though would require some form of central co-ordination. As the publication is delivered to every household in the Borough the scheme could be launched in *Redditch Matters* and residents could be invited to express interest in becoming local Ambassadors. The scheme could also be promoted during the delivery of road show events and PACT meetings, when Council representatives have direct contact with residents. Recruitment of taxi drivers would require the Council to directly approach local taxi companies to explain the scheme, discuss recruitment arrangements and address training requirements.

The Group is suggesting that the Ambassadorial programme, if approved, could be delivered at relatively little cost to the Council. The Ambassadorial Scheme which has been proposed is simpler than Telford and Wrekin Council's programme and should, therefore, be easier to deliver and require limited expenditure. The Council might potentially accrue some costs when launching the review, particularly during the initial recruitment phase as there would need to be investment of Officer time and resources. However, the Group believes that these costs would be offset in the long-term as the number of visitors to attractions promoted by the Ambassadors increased.

Recommendations

Recommendation 11 We RECOMMEND the Council should endorse the Redditch Advertiser's proposal to introduce a Redditch Community Awards programme and should work with the newspaper and other partners to deliver the scheme.

There is not currently an awards scheme recognising the diverse achievements of the local community in the Borough. However, successful delivery of the Chorley Smile Campaign Awards demonstrated that a Community Awards programme can form an integral part of a community pride campaign. Moreover, a Community Awards programme would be a family friendly event that could appeal to all generations in a family.

The Group does not intend to be prescriptive about the frequency of an awards scheme or the exact categories that could be introduced in a Redditch Community Awards Scheme. These would need to be identified by the event organisers. However, this would represent an opportunity to recognise the many diverse achievements of Redditch citizens and consideration should be given to recognising achievements in sports, education, the arts, business, and the voluntary sector.

To celebrate the achievements of Redditch citizens a Redditch Community Awards presentation could take place during the course of a prominent community event, such as the Morton Stanley Festival. This would help to raise the profile of award recipients and contribute to civic pride. Furthermore, the example of the award recipients might also contribute to raising the aspirations of Redditch residents.

The Group believes that there would be significant support for a Redditch Community Awards Scheme. Indeed, the Redditch Advertiser, one of the local papers in Redditch, recently suggested that an awards event could take place in the Borough. The Group believes that this enthusiasm for the idea of a Redditch Community Awards event is likely to be shared by other local organisations. Under these circumstances, the Group is suggesting that the Council should work with local partner

Recommendations

Recommendation 11 (cont) organisations to organise and deliver a Redditch Community Awards event. An event organised in partnership with the Council's partners would contribute to positive working relations with these organisations and ensure that the different skills, knowledge and expertise of staff working in different sectors could contribute to the organisation of the event.

The Group is anticipating that a Redditch Community Awards event could be delivered at relatively little financial cost to the Council. Through working in partnership to deliver the event costs could be shared between partners and support provided in kind. Community champions would need to be identified to propose award categories and to assess submissions. However, this would not be an onerous task and it is a role that some people might be prepared to assume in a voluntary capacity. Consideration could also be given to securing sponsorship from a local business which would help to fund delivery of the event and enable the council to recoup any initial start-up costs.

Recommendations

Recommendation 12 We RECOMMEND that the Council ensure that deficiencies in road signage are addressed: location naming, systemic effectiveness and physical cleanliness.

During the course of interviews with expert witnesses negative perceptions of the town's road system amongst individuals and businesses was consistently raised as a problem for the town. The majority of witnesses suggested that many of the negative perceptions and experiences of negotiating the town resulted from deficiencies with the signage displayed in the town.

In particular, it was suggested that the signs directing visitors to the industrial estates were not clear. Furthermore, businesses reported that many of the signs were regularly dirty, making it difficult to distinguish directions. Under these circumstances companies were experiencing disruptions to business as both deliveries and meetings could be delayed. To minimise the potential impact on business and the local economy the Group are therefore suggesting that improvements should be made to the signs directing people to the industrial estates.

The Redditch Town Centre Partnership has already discussed the possibility of allocating titles to the roundabouts and car parks in Redditch. Currently the car parks have practical names, such as Car Park One and Car Park Two whilst a number, though not all, of the roundabouts in Redditch have already been allocated titles. Whilst the titles of the car parks in particular distinguish the location for the benefit of residents the terminology is not particularly inspiring and does not provide any original description that would help external visitors to identify their location. The Group believes that the allocation of titles to the car parks and roundabouts would enhance the ability of external visitors to navigate the town's road system.

The Group contends that improvements should also be made to the signage indicating the location of the Palace Theatre. Unfortunately, the signs advertising the location of the theatre on the main arterial roads and highways were not considered to be prominent or particularly appealing by a

Recommendations

Recommendation 12 (Cont)

number of the expert witnesses consulted during the review. Whilst the Group recognises that it would be difficult to secure a brown tourism sign for the venue they believe that more prominent signage would help to: enhance recognition of the attraction; enable external visitors to locate the Theatre; and encourage local residents to consider visiting the venue more frequently. The Group therefore believes that Worcestershire County Council's Highways department should be urged to improve the signage directing visitors to the Palace Theatre.

Similarly, the Group have specific concerns about the signage displayed at the town's bus station. Unfortunately, the signage that is currently displayed in the Bus Station was considered to be confusing by external witnesses visiting the town for the first time, as there were a lack of clear directions available to enable customers to determine where their bus stand was located. Currently bus routes enable passengers to travel to Redditch from Birmingham, Stratford-Upon-Avon and parts of Worcestershire. To encourage external visitors from these locations to arrange a return visit to Redditch the Group is urging the Council to work with relevant partner organisations to improve the clarity of the signage in the Bus Station.

Concerns were also expressed during the course of the review about the information shelters that are located on the main arterial roads in Redditch, which provide information about the town to visitors. The Group believes that these information shelters should be retained, as they are a useful reference point for leisure tourists visiting the town. However, the Group is concerned about the potential climate change implications lighting the information shelter at night. Furthermore, the Group recognises that the value of the information shelters is dependent upon ensuring that the information provided is up to date and easy to read. The Group therefore urges the Council to ensure that the details displayed on the information signs is updated and regularly cleaned and that the shelters are not lit at night.

Recommendations

Recommendation 13 We RECOMMEND that the Council should actively seek to establish promotion partnerships and ensure that commercial interests have a full and effective voice.

It is likely that the promotional partnerships that the Council chooses to work with or to operate in order to promote the town and local attractions will change in the long-term as the needs of the local community changes. In the first place the Group considers that it would be useful to establish a partnership that represents the whole Borough. Significantly, each of the three scrutiny reports considered during the review concluded that it was important for a local authority to work in partnership with other local stakeholders as well as with professional partnerships that were designed to promote a particular location. This demonstrates that across local government, but particularly in areas which have struggled to challenge negative perceptions of the town, it is accepted that a local authority should work in partnership if it is to promote the local area effectively.

There are a number of existing partnerships which already work in support of the town's interests, particularly the Redditch Partnership, the town's Local Strategic Partnership, the AiR Partnership (Arts in Redditch) and the Redditch Town Centre Partnership. However, the Group recognises that whilst marketing certain aspects of Redditch may be important to these bodies they have been established to address specific issues i.e. the local strategic outlook of the area; the arts in Redditch; and the problems identified within the town centre. Under these circumstances the Group agrees that allocating responsibility for promoting Redditch to these partnerships would be inappropriate and distract partners from their primary focus.

As recognised during the course of the review there are also a number of existing organisations that already work to promote the local area, in particular Destination Worcestershire and North Worcestershire Tourism. The enthusiasm and professional ability of Destination Worcestershire to promote the county cannot be questioned. However, the body's focus upon promoting member

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Recommendation 13

organisations creates some challenges. As a community leader Redditch Borough Council should be seeking not only to promote Council services, but also other services, local attractions, and businesses based in the town. As such, in the current economic climate the Group does not believe that investing in membership of Destination Worcestershire would represent the best way to promote Redditch at the current time.

Membership of North Worcestershire Tourism might represent a more appropriate option to consider. Membership fees are relatively low and the focus of members is on the north of the county. Moreover North Worcestershire Tourism has links to Destination Tourism as well as to other tourism and marketing experts based in the north of the county.

However, a bespoke Redditch marketing partnership could more actively focus on promoting Redditch attractions and businesses. The Group agrees that businesses based in the Borough, representatives of local attractions and community representatives could be recruited onto this body to ensure that both commercial interests and local aspirations were addressed by the partnership. In the long-term this partnership could consult with existing promotional bodies and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure that the full interests of Redditch stakeholders is recognised. Ultimately, to ensure that this partnership operated effectively it would need to be businesslike and involve no outlay.

A number of expert witnesses during the course of the review suggested that promotional partnerships worked most effectively when the level of Council involvement was restricted and the number of councillor representatives on the partnership was limited. Active participation by businesses in organising and delivering this type of partnership would ensure that companies would have an effective voice capable of promoting commercial interests.

A new partnership would inevitably require some investment of resources. However, the model of

Recommendations

Recommendation 13

the Redditch Town Centre Partnership could be replicated when establishing a promotional partnership to ensure that these resource implications are limited. Significantly the Town Centre Partnership has not been awarded a budget by the Council but has managed to develop a programme of events and propose actions which should lead to improvements to the town centre. It is likely, however, that Officer support will be required in order for the Partnership to operate effectively. This support could, as with the Town Centre Partnership, be provided by an Officer in addition to their existing responsibilities. However, this arrangement will work only if an Officer with a similar level of enthusiasm is keen to lead the project and has the time available to do so.



Promotional Partnerships could help to market some of the many positive assets based in the town such as North East Worcestershire College

Recommendations

Recommendation 14 We RECOMMEND that the Council should ensure that electronic promotion tools are constantly developed and exploited to the full. This should include introducing a virtual business centre and consistent provision of card payment facilities both online, in promotional materials and at all venues .

In the past decade information technology and the ability to communicate with other people using electronic promotional tools has constantly developed and is likely to continue to develop for the foreseeable future. Many of these tools are now utilised by organisations to promote a corporate brand. At a strategic level Redditch Borough Council needs to ensure that, like other organisations, the local authority's information technology continues to be updated, in order to utilise the opportunities presented by these new forms of technology to assist businesses and residents and to improve the efficiency of service delivery.

The Group has identified a number of opportunities that could be addressed by the Council more immediately. Firstly, the Group is suggesting that a virtual business centre should be introduced, to be hosted by Redditch Borough Council. This virtual business centre would reflect the valuable work of the Economic Development Unit. Many businesses may not have the time or resources to engage with Economic Development Officers in person, though might appreciate access to some of the guidance and sources of information that could be provided by the unit online. The Group believes that as a brand a virtual business centre is likely to appeal to businesses as it communicates the type of assistance that the source can provide to businesses. It is envisaged that by using this branding the Economic Development Unit could potentially engage with a wider audience than at present to the benefit of the local economy.

Secondly, the Group is suggesting that it should be possible for customers to book and pay for all Council services online. Expert witnesses have confirmed that online booking arrangements offer convenience for leisure tourists and increasingly considerations about the accessibility of a venue

Recommendations

Recommendation 14 and booking arrangements are helping to determine whether a leisure tourist chooses to visit a particular destination. Currently, however, it is only possible to make online booking and payment arrangements for some Council services. For example, whilst it is possible to book tickets and make advanced payments for attending a performance at the Palace Theatre it is not possible to book attendance at Forge Mill Needle Museum in advance of a visit. Furthermore, whilst it is possible to pay to attend a particular venue using a credit card at some venues this facility is not always available for every service or function.

The introduction of online booking for services where the arrangement is not currently available should be relatively easy to accomplish, particularly as the Council has the technology and expertise required. The Group is, therefore, proposing that a consistent approach should be applied to all Council services.

Finally, the Group recognises that increasingly people identify further information about a location and the facilities available at a location by undertaking a search on the internet. Indeed, during the meeting of the commercial property agents in February 2011 it was suggested that it was important to ensure that references to Redditch businesses and local attractions appeared in a prominent position in internet search results, particularly on the Google Search engine. The potential implication of these search results to leisure tourism, business tourism and ultimately to the local economy are such that the Group urges the Council and relevant partners to ensure that every effort be made to ensure that references to Redditch businesses and attractions feature prominently in internet search results.

Conclusion

The Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Review has been an intense but focussed exercise. The recommendations contained within this report are based on extensive research and are designed to improve perceptions of Redditch and raise the profile of the town, both as a destination that offers family friendly experiences and as an ideal location to conduct business.

Many of the recommendations contained within this report will require thorough consideration. Attempts have been made to minimise the financial impact on the Council of any recommended actions, as the Group has recognised throughout the review that the current economic climate limits the extent to which expenditure can be allocated to promoting Redditch.

However, a number of the recommendations could be delivered relatively quickly at a limited financial cost to the Council and relevant partner organisations. Over time the Group believes that the Council should aspire to market a more positive profile for the town. Whilst this might require initial financial investment, in the long-term improved perceptions of the town, its attractions and business offer will generate a positive impact on the local economy.

The Group, therefore, commends this report for the consideration of the Council's Executive Committee and relevant partner organisations and urges them to endorse these recommendations.

Appendix A

Promotional Leaflet - costs An estimate of the financial costs involved in producing a promotional leaflet to advertise Redditch and the attractions based in the Borough are provided below. These costs relate to publishing 50,000 copies of a promotional leaflet.

Task	Cost
Printing	£3,000
Design	£500
Map	£400
Distribution	£750
Total for a Redditch Borough Council publication	£4,650

Contributors

External witnesses and sources of help

The Group would like to thank the following people who provided evidence during the course of the review:

- Mr Dean Attwell, Managing Director, Oakland International Ltd.
- Mr Jeff Casey, Head of Marketing, NEW College.
- Mr Michael Chawner, former Chair of the Borough Tenants Panel.
- Ms Claire Critchell, Destination Manager, Telford and Wrekin Council.
- Mr Alistair Hayward-Wright, Director of Hayward-Wright Accountants.
- Councillor Sir William Lawrence Bt.
- Mr Alan Ottey, Town Centres Manager, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.
- Mrs Rosemary Sidaway, Rockford Consultants.
- Ms Louise Smith, Quality Assurance Manager, Oakland International Ltd.
- Mr Simon Tipple, Destination Worcestershire Manager.
- Mr Gary Woodman, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

Group contributors

The Group would also like to thank the following groups for contributing evidence that was considered during the review:

- the 47 students who completed questionnaires during Local Democracy Day in October 2010;
- the 20 mature students who participated in the Focus Group exercise in January 2011;
- the two members of the Budget Jury who contributed evidence in February 2011; and
- the five Borough Councillors who contributed evidence during the review.

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The following Redditch Borough Council Officers are thanked for providing evidence and support to the review:

- Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning and Regeneration.
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- Liz Bellaby, Acting Policy Manager
- Hugh Bennett, Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships.
- Helen Broughton, Redditch Partnership Manager.
- Jonathan Cochrane, Arts Development Manager.
- Ray Cooke, Leisure Services Manager.
- Emma Greenfield, Administrative Assistant
- Sharon Forest, Economic Development Assistant.
- John Godwin, Head of Leisure and Cultural Services.
- Lyndsey Hadley, Planning Officer and the Council's lead Officer for the Redditch Town Centre Partnership.
- Georgina Harris, Economic Development Support Officer
- Daniel Khan, Housing Options Officer
- Adrian Marklew, Communications and Marketing Manager.
- Angela Walsh, Media and Communications Officer.

Glossary

AiR Partnership

The AiR Partnership is a partnership of local organisations which work to promote the arts in Redditch. Further information about the work of the AiR Partnership and achievements in the arts in Redditch can be obtained from the AiR Partnership's website using the following link www.artsinredditch.com

Arrow Valley Park

The Arrow Valley Park is located in Redditch. The Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre are both situated within the park, which receives approximately 1 million visitors every year. The park is classified as a regional venue and has been awarded a green flag, which recognises the quality of the venue and the visitor experience. Further information about the Arrow Valley Park can be obtained from the Redditch Borough Council website using the following link <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/leisure-and-culture/arrow-valley-park.aspx>

Astwood Bank Carnival

The Astwood Bank Carnival takes place in Astwood Bank, which is located in the Borough of Redditch. The carnival is organised independently and takes place every year. Further information about the carnival can be viewed on the Astwood Bank Carnival website using the following link <http://www.astwoodbankcarnival.co.uk/>

Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre

The remains of the 12th Century Cistercian Monastery, Bordesley Abbey, are located within Redditch Borough. A Visitor Centre, displaying the many archaeological artefacts that have been found at the site are exhibited in Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre which is located in the grounds of the Abbey and beside Forge Mill Needle Museum. The Visitor Centre, which is based in a reconstructed 16th century barn, houses a shop for the Abbey and Museum. A room in the Visitor Centre can be hired for functions. Further information about Bordesley Abbey can be obtained from the Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Website using the following link <http://www.forgemill.org.uk/index.htm>

Glossary

Destination Worcestershire

Destination Worcestershire is the official county tourism partnership in Worcestershire. The partnership aims to promote the county as a visitor destination, and helps to market member organisations. Further information about Destination Worcestershire can be obtained from the partnership's website using the following link <http://www.visitworcestershire.org/cms/group-travel/destination-worcestershire.aspx>

Feckenham Wake

Feckenham Wake is the local fair which takes place in village of Feckenham every year. The Wake is organised independently by a Wake Committee.

Forge Mill Needle Museum

Forge Mill Needle Museum is located in the Borough close to Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and celebrates the town's needle making heritage. The museum also has a varied exhibition programme throughout the year. Further information about Forge Mill Needle Museum and forthcoming exhibitions can be viewed on the Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre website using the following link <http://www.forgemill.org.uk/forgemill.htm>

Hayward Wright Accountants

Hayward Wright Accountants are based in Redditch Town Centre. The firm offers traditional accountancy services to clients, alongside audit and assurance, taxation, corporate finance and business development services. Further information about Hayward Wright Accountants and the services that the firm provides can be viewed on the company's website using the following link <http://www.haywardwright.co.uk/default.aspx>

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of businesses based in both counties. There are currently approximately 1,300 members of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, including 62 Redditch based businesses. For further information about the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce please visit the chamber's website using the following link <http://www.hwchamber.co.uk/>

Glossary

Kingfisher Shopping Centre

The Kingfisher Shopping Centre is based in Redditch Town Centre. Numerous retail outlets are located within the shopping centre, including both branches of high profile retailers and smaller, independent shops. Further information about the Kingfisher Shopping Centre can be viewed on the centre's website using the following link <http://www.kingfishershopping.com/>

Morton Stanley Festival

The Morton Stanley Festival takes place in the Morton Stanley Park on an annual basis. In 2010, this event occurred over a two-day period during the summer. During the course of the festival a variety of acts performed, including local musicians. A funfair was also installed in the park alongside a community zone showcasing the work of local voluntary groups. The festival was organised by the Council and advertised locally using both traditional media sources and new communications tools such as social media.

Needles Gateway Feature –

The Needles Gateway Feature is a visual artwork on display in Redditch town centre which was unveiled in 2003. The artwork consists of 8 stainless steel needles which trail threads on the pavement surface.

NEW College

North East Worcestershire (NEW) College has branches in Redditch and Bromsgrove. The College provides part-time, full-time and employment training course opportunities. The recent opening of Osprey House in Redditch has enabled the college to offer university level qualifications to potential students. Further information about NEW College can be viewed on the College's website using the following link <http://www.ne-worcs.ac.uk/>

North East Worcestershire Tourism (NEWT) / North Worcestershire Tourism

North East Worcestershire Tourism was a non-profit making partnership which aimed to raise the profile of member organisations based in North East Worcestershire. The recent merger of NEWT with Wyre Forest Tourism has altered the focus of the partnership to encompass the whole of north Worcestershire. The partnership has also assumed a new title, North Worcestershire Tourism, to reflect this change in focus.

Glossary

Oakland International Ltd

Oakland International Ltd is a logistics company which specialises in providing multi-temperature distribution services for food and consumer goods. The British headquarters of Oakwood International Ltd are located close to the Borough in Bromsgrove district. Further information about Oakland International Ltd can be viewed on the company's website using the following link <http://www.oakland-international.com/>

The Paolozzi Mosaics

The Paolozzi mosaics were designed by the British artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005). The mosaics consist of 12 large panels which are displayed in Milward Square in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre.

Redditch Partnership

The Redditch Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in Redditch. Further information about the partnership can be viewed on the Council's website using the following link. <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/community-and-living/redditch-partnership.aspx> The LSP was the subject of a previous scrutiny review at Redditch Borough Council. To view a copy of this report please visit the Council's website using the following link <http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny/oands-review-library.aspx>

Redditch Road Way Arts

The Redditch Road Way Art programme has brought young people and professional artists together to improve the appearance of local assets and to help protect these public assets from vandalism and graffiti. In particular, the programme has involved the production of artwork in Redditch underpasses and bus shelters.

Social Media

Social media are internet based applications which can be utilised for social interaction and communication and are distinct from traditional forms of media such as newspapers and television. Social media can involve a variety of applications including blogs, emails and social networking sites.

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