

Additional Information for Casino Advisory Panel

Significant new and compelling information is now available that was not available at the time of the bid submission in March 2006.

1. Regional Context

The Panel Report to the Secretary of State on the East of England Plan (June 2006), following an Examination in Public identifies Great Yarmouth as a 'Key Centre for Development and Change'. This designation is as a result of a re-focus of policy on the distinctive role of the principal centres in the region which includes Great Yarmouth. The policy allows for the concentration of development in these locations by making the most of existing infrastructure and the **potential** for improvements or extensions to it.

The Council sees this as an endorsement for change and innovation.

The Council made representations on its candidacy for a new regional casino and/or a large casino. The Panel did not see its role to choose or prioritise schemes; however, despite this view the Plan does endorse Great Yarmouth's position in the region and allows focus of policy on its distinctive role. This role is manifested as a tourist resort and it is still one of the top 5 UK destinations.

The East of England Regional Assembly endorsed our original proposal and referred it onto the examination in public stage.

2. Local Context

The Council's Local Development Framework document preparation is progressing quickly. The 'Preferred Options Stage' for the Core Strategy has been reached and is on target. The strategy (approved Council July 2006) provides a vision for the economy, dealing with deprivation issues, tourism, retail growth and transport amongst others. The Vision to 2021 includes a vibrant tourism industry with a re-invigorated seafront being a focus of activity including 'family entertainment centres, night-clubs and restaurants'. Another aim is to strengthen and diversify as well as the modernisation of the local economy. Policy CS19 states:

(The Council will support employment generating sectors through)....

"encouraging development proposals that extend the visitor and tourism offer of the Borough particularly in terms of value and quality of offer and those which support tourism in off-peak seasons."

The 'Great Yarmouth URC Area Action Plan, Preferred Options Draft' (AAP), produced by 1st East Regeneration was published in June 2006. This is a MasterPlan for the Riverside Waterfront areas of Great Yarmouth and neighbouring Gorleston. The draft document has been accepted, in principle, by the local authority. This envisages major mixed development schemes in proximity to the town centre and seafront bringing additional spending power to the resort. A provisional alignment for a new river crossing has also been accepted and this will provide fast, direct, access to the seafront within the next 10 years. Not only will this ease congestion but allow improved accessibility and achieve major reductions in travel time. It will also provide a direct links to the main trunk road network – the A12

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

(Ipswich and London) and the A47 (Norwich, the Midlands and the North) - and allow greater flexibility in public transport operation.

We wish to highlight that:

- The AAP was prepared between April and June 2006, following a consultation exercise in March/April, therefore this document was not available to be included in the original bid submission;
- The AAP was approved in principle by Great Yarmouth Borough Council on 27 July 2006 for second stage consultation;
- The document will form part of the Development Plan once formally adopted by Council; and
- In particular the planning obligations from a Regional casino would go a significant way towards achieving the goals and proposals set out in this AAP. The benefits obtained from a large casino will be important but not as significant.

The AAP relates to the CAP criteria in the following ways:

(i) Community Benefits

The AAP has identified a new high-level bridge over the River Yare (referred to as 'Nelson's Bridge'), linking the A12 trunk road to the South Denes peninsula, joining the seafront at South Marine Parade.

Paragraph 5.7.1 states that Nelson's Bridge is **"a key requirement for the revitalisation of the South Denes area"**.

In paragraph 5.7.2 (p. 34), it states that **"The County Council has modelled a new river crossing and demonstrated that, in traffic terms, it would provide large economic benefits, attracting a significant volume of traffic... The regeneration arguments in terms of providing improved access to EastPort and vacant sites at South Denes reinforce the transport case and would transform perceptions of accessibility and remoteness in this part of the URC."**

The South Denes area is currently characterised as being **"characterised by dereliction, contamination and under-use"** as a result of a decline in traditional industries in Great Yarmouth. The development of a regional casino has the ability to assist in the delivery of this beneficial bridge project.

The LSP has now established a Cultural Partnership involving a range of local stakeholders which is working to develop cultural initiatives and projects building upon the Councils Cultural Strategy which was adopted in 2005. This will assist the Council in addressing the wider range of potential community benefits.

(ii) Willingness to Licence

At the 29th June 2006 Full Council meeting our Draft Statement of Gambling Policy was approved for public and stakeholder consultation. The draft Statement has been prepared having regard to the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 and it includes information relating to current and future casino provision in the Borough. There is a presumption that the council as the Licensing Authority would be willing to licence new casinos.

3. EastPort Outer Harbour

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

East Port Great Yarmouth Limited, Great Yarmouth Port Authority and International Port Holdings have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which provides a 9-month period of exclusivity, during which time all parties will be seeking to conclude negotiations that will lead to the completion of final contracts enabling the transfer of the existing port operations and the commencement of the construction of the outer harbour. Construction is expected to begin in February 2007 with the port being operational in Autumn 2008. A regional/large casino at Great Yarmouth would significantly increase the chances of the town attracting visitors from new European markets to the resort.

4. Seafront Redevelopment & Regeneration

The council has launched a regeneration project looking for developer interest in a site of approximately 11 hectares of council owned prime seafront estate. The ambition is to create a new sense of destination for the area and build upon the investment that has taken place in recent years. This means that there are now two available sites within the prime seafront that are suitable for a casino development. This will enable robust competition in the selection of the site, developer, and operator as required under schedule 9 of the Gambling Act. We already have firm interest from a number of casino operators.

In addition at the 29th June Full Council meeting a decision was taken to borrow up to £2.5m under the provisions of the prudential code for further seafront public realm and highway improvements. This builds upon other recent investments in the area and is seen in this context as giving confidence to future investors and developers of the council's determination to deliver a long term regenerative commitment ensuring commercial risk is optimised.

On the 30th June 2006 Halcrow Group Ltd submitted a draft baseline report which studied Great Yarmouth seafront on behalf of The East of England Development Agency and the Council. The findings give a robust assessment of the current tourism, car parking, highway, transportation, land use, conservation, built and landscape design and character issues; upon which a range of key assessment criteria can be based in the context of locating and developing a large casino.

5. Social Impact

The 19th July 2006 meeting of the Council's Cabinet agreed to establish a stakeholder advisory panel to assist in reviewing submissions from casino operators and developers and to provide recommendations to the Council. This included the following:

Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership
Chairman of 1st East (URC)*
Area Commander Norfolk Constabulary
Manager – Great Yarmouth Citizens Advice Bureau
GYBC Cabinet Member – Enterprise, Tourism & Culture
GYBC Leader of Opposition

* Due to a potential conflict of interest this was later amended to Chairman of Chamber of Commerce (awaiting response)

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

The above will be supported by key council officers.

In addition during May/June the council appointed a Neighbourhood Manager and team covering the central urban area of Great Yarmouth and Norfolk Constabulary appointed a Criminal Damage Officer. These roles cover the immediate urban area behind the seafront and the town centre. These roles will help in identifying and mitigating any possible social impacts of the developments such as these.

Mark Barrow
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
14th August 2006