

Entertainment Economy Scrutiny Review

Draft Final Report

September 2009



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1. Introduction

The Scrutiny Sub-Committee approved a review into the Entertainment Economy in September 2008. The review panel consisted of:

Until May 2009

Councillor Ellis – Chairman ¹

Councillor Reuby

Councillor Berridge

Councillor Dye

Councillor Seath

Councillor Ann Taylor

From May 2009

Councillor Pickersgill

Councillor Reuby - Chairman

Councillor Berridge

Councillor Dye

Councillor Seath

A small team of officers supported the review and other council officers gave their time as witnesses and provided data for the review.

The review concern was to consider whether there is there a good mix of daytime and evening entertainment across the district that serves the needs of residents of all ages. Also, to look at whether the entertainment provision is attractive to visitors and people choosing to work in the district. The scope for the review is set out at Appendix A.

The Panel were tasked with holding a series of meetings to consult local people on what entertainment they would like to see in the district and also consider issues relating to the entertainment economy including:

- Accessibility
- Location
- The findings of the Experian Futures Study
- The council's vision for a distinctive cultural and visitor experience as outlined in the Corporate Plan.

¹ In May 2009 Councillors Ellis and Ann Taylor became members of the Executive and therefore it was necessary for them to stand down from the review. Councillor Reuby, who had been a member of the Panel from the outset, took over as Chair and Councillor Pickersgill joined the review in May 2009.

During the course of this review, a separate scrutiny panel was formed – City Life – Balancing the Needs of the Local Community. This panel were commissioned to consider how the various policies, plans and strategies the council has for Canterbury city centre are co-ordinated effectively. There will be areas of overlap with this review and some of the Entertainment Economy review conclusions will feed into the work of the City Life review.

Whilst the scope of the Entertainment Economy review was geographically broader than that of the City Life Review, covering Herne Bay and Whitstable as well as Canterbury, the Panel felt it was important to clearly define their task from the outset as distinct from that of the City Life Panel. The Panel decided its primary task would therefore be to map the entertainment provision across the district, identify areas where provision was lacking and suggest improvements for supporting this economy.

Recommendation 1: That the City Life: Balancing the Needs of the Local Community Scrutiny Review Panel have regard to the findings of this report that relate to Canterbury City Centre.

For the purpose of the review, entertainment was defined as a balanced mix of activities and facilities such as restaurants, cafes, bars, pubs and clubs, live music venues, retail and cultural facilities and leisure and sport.

The Panel were keen not to create a ‘wish list’ particularly in the context of the current economic downturn, but felt it was important to set out the activities available in the district and also what entertainment people wanted to inform future development opportunities.

As a district-wide review, the Panel also wanted to define its remit geographically. It recognised that although the provision of entertainment affected all residents, the nature of the entertainment economy in rural areas is different from those in the three towns. People choosing to live in rural parts of the district generally have to travel to one of the three towns for the majority of their organised entertainment. The Panel therefore considered that the main issue for rural residents was accessing the entertainment provision in the three towns.

It was also agreed from the outset that the different nature of the economies in the three towns meant they should be considered individually, as well as identifying cross-boundary issues that affected the district as a whole.

2. Background

Role of the council

Whilst the provision of entertainment is predominately market driven, the City Council does play a variety of roles in the entertainment economy across the district. It is responsible for:

- Planning
- Licensing
- Environmental health
- Leisure services
- Economic regeneration,
- Tourism
- Museums
- Cultural services
- Facilitating community events across the district.

Beyond the individual services, the council has an overarching objective which is outlined in the Corporate Plan (2008-2012) to promote participation in culture, leisure and play.² Identified in the council's Corporate Plan (2008-2012), as areas that could develop further are:

- To strengthen tourism across the district and raise the number and length of staying visitor trips.
- The growth of the "knowledge" economy

This vision was developed from the Canterbury District Futures Study which was commissioned to help identify the preferred direction that the district should be taking. As part of the study, in-depth consultation with stakeholders was carried out.³ They identified that of a possible five scenarios for Canterbury's future, the three preferred options were:

- **Experience economy**

Focusing on tourism, leisure and Canterbury's retail and cultural offer to create a reputation for the district as a location for high quality consumer and leisure activities.

- **Knowledge economy**

Developing new enterprises and using educational links to attract and retain graduates and professionals.

- **Green economy**

A commitment to green and sustainable principles.

A number of challenges to deliver these scenarios were identified by the study. The Panel considered that the following related directly to this review:

- Improving the quality of the visitor offer in terms of quality, effective marketing and brand management (experience)

² Canterbury City Council, Corporate Plan (2008-2012), p9.

³ Consultation included a residents survey which 3,200 residents responded to, three workshops with residents to identify spending priorities and two conferences with school children to gain their views on the future of the district.

- Achieving a retail offer district from competing centres, particularly Ashford (experience)
- Changing perceptions of the district as an exciting place to live (knowledge)

The Panel decided to look further at the relationship between the entertainment offer and peoples perception of the district. It wanted to establish to what degree the offer itself needed improving or whether perceptions could be changed through better promotion of the existing entertainment provision.

3. Conduct of the review

3.1 Officer consultation

The review panel first heard evidence from council officers from the following departments:

- Regeneration and Economic Development
- Community Services
- Development Control
- Licensing
- Culture and Communications

3.2 Stakeholder consultation

The Panel then focused on each of the three towns in the district, speaking to the Town Centre Co-ordinators before holding sessions with stakeholders in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable. A full list of the witnesses that participated in the review is set out at Appendix B.

3.3 Consultation with young people

The Panel also decided to commission the council's Community Development Team to carry out a more specific consultation with young people on the entertainment economy through the 'Say What?' forum. 'Say What?' is the council's young consultants scheme and three sessions were held in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable to inform the review of what young people think of the entertainment provision in each of the three towns.

3.4 Entertainment Economy Survey

A survey was issued asking members of the public for their views on the entertainment provision across the district. At the time of the Panel's report, 236 responses were received. The survey results are set out at Appendix C.

Through the survey, the Panel wanted to establish:

- The type and frequency of entertainment used by residents.
- What improvements people wanted at the following times of the day in the City and Towns:
 - Daytime
 - Early evening (5-8pm)
 - 8pm till late
- The issues for people in rural areas accessing entertainment
- What additional activities are desirable.

Finally, publicity in the local press, District Life magazine and on the council's dedicated scrutiny website was used to announce that the review was taking place and invited comments from interested members of the public.

The consultation undertaken helped the panel to understand the issues around the entertainment economy across the three towns.

4. Town centres for all

What is an ideal entertainment economy?

In addition to seeking views at local level from council officers, residents and stakeholders, the Panel considered the recent report by the Civic Trust 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All'. The report looks in detail at the types of town and city centre that should be encouraged in the future, entertainment trends and examples of best practice. Whilst it focuses on the evening and late night economy, it also looks more generally at the elements needed to provide a varied entertainment offer.⁴

The Panel took the view that this was a fundamental issue for the review and that a variety of entertainment was key to creating the sense that the district was a vibrant and diverse place to be. They therefore decided to investigate the entertainment offer across the district in the context of the 'Town Centres for All' report.

5. Canterbury City

As well as speaking with officers from the relevant council departments, the Panel held a meeting at Orange Street Music Club with entertainment businesses in Canterbury invited. The following witnesses attended:

- Stefan Colley, Orange Street Music Club
- Alex Smith, Orange Street Music Club
- Lorraine Lower, Independent Events Organiser
- Claire Vidler, Coffee and Corks
- Winston Feather, Feathers Antiques

⁴ The Civic Trust: 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All'

The officer and stakeholder witness sessions helped the panel to build a picture of the issues relating to the entertainment economy specific to Canterbury City.

The Panel heard that there was a perception that the evening economy in Canterbury was dominated by alcohol and in particular vertical drinking venues which could deter families and older people from using the city at night. The 'Town Centres for All' report indicates however, that on a national basis a shift away from activities focused solely on alcohol is apparent in some areas of the country. It also suggests this trend will continue as the falling number of young people and rise in the number of older people and single households creates a demand for a broader range of activities.⁵



Chill nightclub, Canterbury.

The stakeholder session and survey responses indicated there was evidence of this shift occurring at a local level. Although alcohol continued to play a significant role in the evening economy, people stated they wanted a more varied provision. The survey responses revealed that in the early and late evening, public safety was the top priority. The anti-social behaviour caused by alcohol was also repeatedly cited as a deterrent to going out at these times. Instead, more outdoor activities including live music, street performances and better use of open spaces for entertainment were the top priority for additional activities. People also wanted entertainment venues that appeal to a wider range of people and in particular families. An improved cinema, live music venue, ice rink and bowling alley were given as examples.



Coffee and Corks, Canterbury.

The Stakeholder session identified there was evidence some businesses were responding to

this demand. For example, the Orange Street Music Club and Coffee and Corks were innovative venues within the licensed economy. Orange Street Music Club had gained national recognition for live jazz and folk music nights. Coffee and Corks also promoted activities beyond drinking such as poetry evenings.

The Panel considered however, that there was generally a lack of non-alcohol related activities into the evening, high quality and live

⁵ The Civic Trust: 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All', p53-54.

entertainment. Activities that encouraged a wider audience base and families should be encouraged.

5.1 Improved cinema

The need for an improved cinema in Canterbury city centre was repeatedly highlighted throughout the course of the review and through the survey responses.

The broad appeal of the cinema means it plays a key role in providing entertainment to a wide range of people including families, teenagers and older people.



Canterbury has two cinemas; the Odeon based in the city centre which shows mainstream films, and the Guilbenkian Theatre based at the University of Kent located on the periphery of the city. This has a broader programme that includes independent films. The Panel considered however, that the benefits associated with the multiplexes at Ashford and Westwood Cross such as free parking and a wider range of films caused some people to travel outside the district to visit the cinema. This was also supported by the survey results.

An example of a popular cinema with a city centre location is the City Screen in York. In addition to its varied film offering, it also has a bar, restaurant and a flexible basement space which is used as an Internet café during the day and for events in the evening ranging from comedy and live music to conferences.

The Panel recognised that a new cinema would only be developed in the city centre if a clear market need was demonstrated to a developer. The Senior Planning Officer explained that it could be very difficult to obtain private finance investment in the entertainment sector and that there hadn't been a new application for a cinema in 19 years.



It could however, be helpful for the council to identify the types of entertainment facilities that were desirable to inform future potential developers.

Another key facility the survey responses identified as missing in the city was a bowling alley. However, during the course of the review a ten pin bowling facility opened in the city centre.

5.2 Early evening and public realm

The City Centre Development Scrutiny review conducted in 2006 identified that there was a 'dead period' during the week between 6pm and 8pm after the shops had closed and before restaurants and other evening venues opened. The review recommended: "*That City Centre Management consult city centre retailers, coffee bars and council services such as museums, regarding the feasibility of later opening hours during the week and at weekends.*"⁶



Canterbury High Street

The Panel heard evidence from officers in the council's Regeneration and Economic Development department who explained this 'dead' period was still an issue in the early evening. The survey responses also revealed that some people found the city intimidating at this time of the day with public safety being a priority. Later shop closing times, family and street entertainment were viewed as activities that could help overcome this lull in the day. A number of shops, mainly located in the Whitefriars shopping centre, did open late on a Thursday. However, as not all shops participated, late night shopping did not work as effectively as it perhaps could at encouraging people to stay in the city either after shopping or work.

The Canterbury City Centre Co-ordinator also explained there was inadequate street lighting on the High Street which did not invite people to stay in the area once the shops had closed. He considered that ways of making the City Centre more inviting and appealing should be pursued further. For example, Edinburgh's Royal Mile displayed innovative lighting including the illumination of flagship buildings during its winter festivals to make it clear the area was 'open for business' and there were activities available for people to participate in.

There were also other opportunities for linking the day and night time economies to help encourage greater activity in the early evening. For example discounts for customers using more than one facility in the evening.

The Panel considered that improving the atmosphere in the early evening was key to conveying the sense that the city centre was a vibrant place to be.

⁶ City Centre Development Short Topic Scrutiny Review 2006/07, p3.

Currently, parts of the city centre could feel deserted at this time of the day which did not encourage day-trippers or shoppers to stay longer into the evening. The Panel were encouraged that there were opportunities to improve the lighting as part of the redevelopment of the Marlowe Theatre and Beaney art museum and library. These developments offered an opportunity to help rejuvenate the city at this time.

The use of the public realm for events was also key to creating a vibrant atmosphere in the city and a top priority for those who responded to the survey. It was important that when an area of the public realm was redeveloped, consideration was given to how the space could be utilised for events. For example, that the design and placement of street furniture did not limit the way the space could be used. The Panel heard that as the largest paved open space in the city centre, St Georges Street provided an opportunity for street entertainment and events. It was important that this potential was considered as part of the relocation of the market.

Recommendation 2: That future projects that have an impact on the public realm for example St Georges Street, seek to ensure that the use of public open spaces for street entertainment are possible.

6 Herne Bay

Next the Panel visited Herne Bay to speak with local people about the entertainment economy in the Town. The Panel heard evidence from Mr M Khoury, a local resident and businessman in Herne Bay, Mr D Eburne a local resident and member of various local groups and Donna Seers, the Duty Manager of the King's Hall.

6.1 Events

The Town Centre Co-ordinator explained to the Panel the importance events played in Herne Bay. There are few hotels in Herne Bay and consequently the town relies largely on the day tourist trade. Good quality events are therefore vital to



Classic car show, Herne Bay

attract people to the town. For example, the annual classic car show which had attracted 102 entries in 2008. It was estimated this had brought an additional eight thousand people to the town that day. The Herne Bay Festival is also a key event for the Town each year.

To build on Herne Bay's reputation as a day trip destination, work was also being undertaken to promote the Town to coach companies in Kent and South East London. These coach companies had been invited to visit the town and were issued with information on upcoming events. In addition, businesses in the Town were being asked to participate in a scheme whereby day-trippers were given a book of vouchers for local restaurants, cafes and shops to encourage an increase in visitor spend.

Live outdoor music was also a cost effective way of encouraging people to the town and could provide a good return for retailers. Traditionally the live music scene in Herne Bay was strong with a number of pubs holding regular live music nights. A regular "battle of the bands" was also held in the King Hall. However, recently the number of people visiting local pubs had dropped which had in turn caused publicans to reduce the number of live music events held.

Herne Bay is also well off for sports facilities including currently the Pier Sports Centre, and sports clubs including judo, football, roller-skating and roller hockey. The Panel heard there is an extensive range of facilities, clubs and societies in the Town for various age groups, but many could not afford the cost of renting accommodation and some of the clubs were not well advertised. Some groups did not wish to increase their membership because this would require the use of larger venues with additional rental costs.

The priority during the day for people who responded to the survey was an improved retail offer. Currently the main shopping areas in Herne Bay are dominated by low-priced and charity shops. It was considered that a more diverse range including high quality, national chains and individual shops should be encouraged.

A project to help deliver the regeneration of Herne Bay is currently underway and the entertainment offer in the Town is being considered as part of this project.

Recommendation 3: That the regeneration of entertainment be considered as part of the on-going Herne Bay regeneration project.

The Town Centre Co-ordinator considered that the Memorial Park was under-used and could be better promoted. There were eight public tennis courts in the park; however, they were unmanned and not as popular as they could be outside of the peak summer months. Another area could be better utilised for entertainment was the bandstand. The survey results supported this with a number of respondents citing the bandstand as an opportunity for increased outdoor entertainment.



Central Bandstand, Herne Bay.



Memorial Park, Herne Bay.

6.2 The Bay Project

The Panel heard that the Bay Project was an initiative funded by the Salvation Army to provide “practical, creative and accessible activities for children, young people and families”⁷ in Herne Bay. The project employs two full time and one part time member of staff. As well as providing activities for young people, the project also runs a number of initiatives in the community in partnership with agencies including Kent County Council, the NHS and Police. A current project aimed to provide support and a safe environment to young people intoxicated with alcohol on the sea front on Friday evenings. The Project was represented at their local Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meeting. The Panel considered that the good practice demonstrated by the Bay Project should be shared with other PACT Panels across the district.

The Panel also considered that ways of facilitating the sharing of best practice between the PACT Panels should be explored. Currently there was no mechanism in place for information on the initiatives of an individual PACT to be reported to other PACTs within the district. The introduction of a management group for the PACTs or regular best practice meetings could enable information to be shared more widely. The Panel learned that the council’s Community Safety Team were currently carrying out a review of the district’s PACT Panel arrangements and considered this an opportunity to develop a means of sharing information on good practice within the entertainment economy.

Recommendation 4: That information on the ‘Bay Project’ initiative be circulated to the PACT Panels across the district. Also, that information sharing on good practice within the entertainment economy be considered as part of the review of the PACT panels currently being conducted by Community Safety.

⁷ The Bay Project Annual Report, February 2008 to March 2009, p2.

7 Whitstable

Finally the Panel visited Whitstable and heard evidence from the following stakeholders:

- Eileen Hargreaves, District Watch
- Peter Hunt, Vice Chair of the Lindley Players
- Richard Martindale, Whitstable Business Club and Whitstable Community College
- Miggie Ravenscroft, Landlady of The Duke of Cumberland Public House



The Duke of Cumberland

The witnesses considered there was a diverse range of activities in Whitstable that catered for a variety of ages, although a lack of entertainment for young people was still apparent. An example of the diverse offer included “Jazz Brunch” held at the Duke of Cumberland for older people on Friday afternoons.

The survey also indicated that many people were satisfied with the entertainment offer in the town. Generally there was a good live

music offer in the local pubs and bars, although the panel noted this could be difficult for teenagers to access. Sports provision in the town included rugby, football, cricket, a swimming pool, bowling alley and lawn bowls.



The Horsebridge Arts and Community Centre

Whitstable is renowned for its events throughout the year with the Oyster Festival attracting 75,000 visitors over the course of a week as well as the Regatta, Carnival and Harbour Day.⁸ The possible future use of Whitstable Harbour may be dealt with by the upcoming review of the Whitstable Harbour Board. The Panel considered that the Horsebridge Centre also offers a wide range of activities such as events, exhibitions, comedy club and fitness classes. In addition, the redevelopment of Whitstable Castle would provide further opportunities as a facility that will cater for larger events.

The Panel also heard that the Whitstable Playhouse which was owned and managed by the Lindley Players had approximately 400 members from the

⁸ whitstableoysterfestival.com

age of 14 upwards. The theatre appealed not only to performers but also to those interested in the technical side of theatre production. The Lindley Players' productions were very popular in the town, particularly the pantomime with queues forming the night before tickets went on sale. As a voluntary organisation, Members pay a yearly membership of £5. Access to the drama groups and theatre activities is then free to Members.

Issues

8 Young people

8.1 Place Survey

Residents identified through the results of the 2008/09 Place Survey that improved activities for young people was one of their top priorities.

The Place Survey is designed to find out what residents think of living in their local area and the services the council and other organisations, such as the police and health service provide. The survey replaces the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey which focused solely on services provided by the City Council.

As part of the survey, residents were asked to choose their top five priorities for what most needs improving out of 20 issues. When the results of the Place Survey are compared to those of the previous two BVPI surveys, it is clear that activities for young people is increasingly becoming a priority for residents of the district as the table below demonstrates:

Quality of Life: What most needs improving			
Rank	2008/09 Place Survey	2006/07 BVPI survey	2003/04 BVPI survey
1	Road & pavement repairs	Level of traffic congestion	Road and pavement repairs
2	Level of traffic congestion	Road and pavement repairs	Level of traffic congestion
3	Activities for teenagers	Health services	Level of crime
4	Level of crime	Activities for teenagers	Health
5	Affordable decent housing	Affordable decent housing	Teenagers

The Head of Community Development informed the Panel that young people had been consulted on activity provision as part of the development of the District Youth Strategy. The view expressed by the young people consulted was that there was a lack of choice in activities and a lack of provision generally. What they said they would like to see in the district was more sporting activities, particularly adventure sports and a live music venue. However, there had been some improvement in provision recently with the introduction of regular teen nights at local nightclubs which had proven

popular. For example Teen Fusion was held monthly at Talk Nightclub in Herne Bay for young people age 13 to 17 years.

8.2 After school provision

There was also good number of youth and school clubs across the district which catered for young people particularly between 5pm and 7pm. Increased after school activities as part of the government's 'extended schools' initiative, whereby all children should have access to a variety of activities beyond the school day by 2010 to help meet their needs and those of their parents and the wider community.⁹

Richard Martindale from Whitstable Community College explained that the school day no longer lasted from 9am to 3pm. After school, there were a broad range of activities and clubs that students could participate in until 6pm. Activities included sport, music tuition, dance, drama, art and special interest clubs. The college were also looking at the times at which they provided this support with a view to introducing further activities between 6pm and 8pm.

Although there is a good provision of clubs and societies that young people could join in across the district. The Panel also considered that not all young people wanted to take part in organised group activities.

8.3 Live music

Live music is important to many young people. The sector has grown over recent years and is expected develop further in the future¹⁰. However, the evidence received by the Panel indicated this activity could be difficult for young people to access. Whilst there is live music across the district, a significant proportion of it takes place in bars, pubs and clubs from which young people are normally excluded. For example, young people expressed an interest in the "open mic" nights held at the Duke of Cumberland but as a pub, under-18s were prevented from attending. The need for an improved live music offer was also highlighted in the responses to the survey. The Panel recognised that with the increasing popularity of live music, the need for a dedicated live music venue was becoming more apparent. Spaces for young people to practice their own music was also highlighted. **Whilst a live music venue would provide entertainment to the population at large, the Panel considered that it could particularly help to address the lack of activities for young people.**

8.4 Say What? Consultation

Through the Say What? consultation facilitated by the council's Community Development Team, the Panel sought the views of young people on the provision of entertainment in Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable. The

⁹ National College for School Leadership: Lessons from Extended Schools, p4.

¹⁰ The Civic Trust: 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All', p60.

young people who participated in the consultation were aged between 10 and 16 years. The full results of the consultation are set out at Appendix D.

The majority of those consulted indicated there was a generally a good mix of entertainment across the district.

In Canterbury, all agreed they would like more organised events for example, under-18 nights, fireworks, film, food and music festivals. They stated there were not enough activities for young people and cited bowling, an ice rink and improved parks as desirable. Generally the group felt the retail offer in Canterbury was good with a wide variety of shops that were affordable for young people. However, they considered there could be more independent shops.

The Herne Bay Panel cited the sea, battle of the bands and the Herne Bay Festival as examples of the diverse activities the Town has offer. However, they all agreed there were not enough activities for young people. Their group's wish list of activities included more live music, skate competitions, fun fairs and fire works. There was support too for affordable activities such as free swimming or roller-skating. Improvements they would like to see in the town included a better-maintained sea front the retail offer.

The Whitstable Panel also wanted more events and activities for young people in the Town. The activities they enjoyed included the skate park, leisure centre, crabbing competitions and bowling. Live bands again featured as desirable as well as regattas, activities on the beach and fun fairs. There were also no under-18 nights in Whitstable as there were in Canterbury in Herne Bay.

9 Promotion of entertainment

A key issue raised throughout the course of the review was the need for a co-ordinated approach to advertising and raising awareness of the entertainment offer across the district. The Panel identified examples of good practice of promotion.

The witness sessions established that with the exception of the under 18 age group, people were generally satisfied with the range of entertainment available across the district.

They also identified examples of good practice for the promotion of the district's entertainment such as the "*Taste of...*" leaflets which had been produced in partnership with local businesses to promote places to eat in the city and towns. However, activities and events were not always known about or promoted in a coordinated way that suggested Canterbury was a vibrant place to be.



Orange Street Music Club,
Canterbury.

One objective identified in the Corporate Plan is to change the perception of Canterbury as a day trip destination. Whilst recognising the hotel offer in Canterbury needed to be improved, the Panel also heard evidence that entertainment provision could be better promoted to encourage day trippers to stay in the district longer.

The Panel heard evidence that a barrier for independent businesses is getting information to potential customers. The costs associated with promotion can be a significant factor. Stefan Colley from the Orange Street Music Club explained that some independent businesses were charged a fee to advertise at the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) which discouraged them from doing so. This means visitors did not always get a full picture of the range of activities and events available to them across the district. Commercial enterprises that are not direct tourist attractions for example, pubs, restaurants, hotels and shops are charged for poster or leaflet display space.

Currently, visitor attractions or publicly available events or festivals are exempt from these charges and the payable space equates to approximately 10% of the total leaflet area available at the VIC, with the rest being given over to attractions, things to do and events. The revenue generated from the charges is channelled back into marketing activity for the district.

The Panel also heard it was not always viable for independent traders to produce marketing material such as flyers to advertise events. It was suggested that as an alternative, the temporary notice boards used to promote activities during the Canterbury Festival could be made permanent to allow cultural entertainment businesses and organisations in the City to post adverts about forthcoming events. This would help minimise the amount of marketing material they needed to produce. It could also help to raise awareness with day-trippers and shoppers of the entertainment offer in the city and encourage them to stay later.

The introduction of notice boards would require planning permission and resources both in terms of their installation and the staff time required to keep the information on the boards updated. However, the Panel agreed that the use of visual displays to promote the entertainment offer in Canterbury and potentially the coastal towns could help to create the perception that the district is a vibrant place.

Recommendation 5: The council should revisit existing policy and if necessary, identify potential sites for notice boards to raise awareness of “what’s on” across the district.

9.1 Promotion of activities for young people

The City Council's website www.notbored.net contains information for young people with links to activities in the district as well as listing facilities for young people such as local cinemas, theatres and leisure centres. An activities guide is also published online with details of activities over the coming months. The Head of Community Development also explained to the Panel that a list of

facilities for young people was currently being developed which would identify activities for 0-5, 5-11 and 11-18 age groups.

Kent County Council also provide a website www.togogo.info where young people can find comprehensive listings of activities for example, sports, youth clubs, outdoor recreation, arts, drama and music across Kent. The website also has details of events/activities promotions, how to get involved in volunteering and conservation and links to social networking sites Facebook and Bebo where young people can share information on things to do in Kent.

9.2 Website

The council own or are affiliated to several websites which provide information on entertainment across the district.

- **canterbury.co.uk** is the primary website for the district with information on the main attractions, details of upcoming events, a directory of places to eat and drink as well as practical information on accommodation and transport for visitors.
- **creativecanterbury.com** is a council run website which provides a database for creative industries to promote their work. The website also has information on the main festivals in the district and provides an events area for people to promote cultural and music events.
- **hernebaytp.co.uk** is run by Herne Bay Town Partners and is specific to Herne Bay. It has comprehensive information on clubs and societies, events and businesses in the Town. The website receives 50 000 hits per month.

The Stakeholder session identified that there was however, a perception that there was no website for district which could be used to advertise independent businesses and upcoming events.

The Panel considered that the events pages on the Canterbury websites were not utilised as widely as they could be to represent all the activities available across the district. The events page on *canterburycreative.com* had no events listed and those on the *canterbury.co.uk* website tended to be activities associated with the council, although there were some exceptions such as the Gulbenkian Theatre and Cinema. The Panel felt there was potential for the entertainment pages on these websites to be integrated and developed further so they could be used to promote local businesses and provide more comprehensive information on the activities available. For example the Herne Bay Town Partners website had extensive information of the local attractions, activities, clubs and societies available in the Town.

Whilst the council do not currently run or facilitate a dedicated website for Whitstable, there was an independent website **seewhitstable.co.uk** where events and activities could be promoted. The Town Centre Coordinator explained the Whitstable Chamber of Commerce was exploring the feasibility

of running one similar to the Herne Bay Town Partners site. Whitstable Community College were considering introducing a dedicated website for the Town.

There were clearly a number of websites across the district with information on activities and events. However, bringing them together as one comprehensive portal could help people access this information more easily.

Recommendation 6: Include promotion of activities and entertainment run by both the council and entertainment providers as part of the upcoming review of the council's website and electronic communications.

10 Events organisation

Whilst a broader spectrum of events was considered desirable, the Panel identified throughout the witness sessions that there was a perception that organising events in public spaces across the district could be difficult. It was also reported that there was a lack of awareness of how and where events could be organised. However, the council's Cultural Development Team did promote an event toolkit to offer guidance to event organisers on the practicalities of holding an event. Information was also available on locations across the district where events could be held.

The Commercial Health Manger explained that Canterbury City Centre had recently been licensed for entertainment to make it easier for people to organise events. In the past, events organisers were required either to obtain individual licences or Temporary Events Notices (TENs). Individual licences cost the organiser an initial and yearly fee and TENs can only be served a maximum of 12 times per year.

Licensing the city meant organisers could now seek permission from the council instead which was both cheaper and more flexible. Licensing areas in this way was already established practice in rural areas of the district. Parish council's often licensed village greens so events could be held with their permission. It was hoped that by simplifying the licensing process in Canterbury, more people would be encouraged to hold events in the city.

Areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable were also licensed and used for entertainment as follows:

Herne Bay

Memorial Park
Clocktower Plaza
Hampton Green

Whitstable

Westmead Recreation Ground
Tower Tea Gardens
Castle Grounds
Tankerton Slopes

However, the Commercial Health Manager considered that more comprehensive licensing of the areas within the Towns for entertainment

could be beneficial and help make it easier for people to put on events in the Town.

Recommendation 7: That an audit of the public open spaces in Herne Bay and Whitstable be undertaken to establish if there would be benefit from licensing further areas of the Towns for entertainment.

11 Centralised box office

As part of the new Marlowe Theatre development, a new box office system was being introduced with an Internet sales facility. As part of the new system, potential had been identified for the new box office to sell tickets on behalf of other organisations and businesses. The Marlowe box office already handled advance booking for some external entertainment venues and organisations such as the Margate Theatre Royal, Canterbury Choral Society and more recently there had been a pilot of online ticket sales for events held during the Canterbury Festival.

The stakeholder session the Panel held in Canterbury suggested that once the new box office system was established, ways of extending this facility so it could be used by the wider cultural and entertainment business community should be explored. Consolidating event listings and bookings into one system could help businesses tap into a greater audience base and increase attendance. In addition, combining resources could help reduce promotional and booking costs for the parties involved.

Recommendation 8: To deliver a Canterbury district ticket agency with the facility for online sales in 2010.

12 Transport

A lack of public transport can also create a barrier to people going out or using facilities. The council's Licensing Policy 2008 states: "late night bus and train services into the district are virtually non-existent".¹¹ It highlights that this can prevent people living in rural areas accessing entertainment provision in the urban areas and non-residents from coming into the district at all. The survey results indicated that a lack of public transport between people's homes and the City and Town centres was an issue across the district.

Whilst it was possible to reach Canterbury from the coastal towns in the early evening, there was no public transport beyond 11pm to return people to the coast. The Panel also heard that a lack of public transport was an issue for young people wanting to access activities and entertainment. For example, the skateboard park at Swalecliffe was popular with young people from Herne Bay and Whitstable. However, its location, combined with a lack of adequate lighting at the skate park meant skaters often preferred to stay in the town centres. This was particularly apparent in the winter months. The young

¹¹ Canterbury City Council, Licensing Policy 2008, p17.

people who participated in the Say What? consultation identified a lack of transport as a barrier to going out.

The recent Rural Transport Scrutiny Review considered evidence that people living in rural areas of the district could be prevented from accessing services particularly in the evening and late-night economies. This was supported by the responses from residents living in rural areas to the Panel's survey:

"Living in a village, a car is essential. Trains pass straight through except for limited stops. Canterbury is the nearest town but does not really have any entertainment venues except a down and out cinema".

"Totally inadequate bus links. Infrequent and expensive".

The review identified that currently, Kent County Council (KCC) allocates funding to public transport based on the value for money the service provides and the time of day the service operates with daytime travel between Monday and Friday being the priority. KCC also assess whether the service provides access to transport to learning, healthcare, employment or essential food shopping.

The review concluded that access to sport, leisure and recreation facilities should be included in KCC's criteria for funding. It also identified that the use of private hire and taxi buses had the potential to provide a flexible transport solution for people living in rural areas.

The 'Town Centres for All' report also highlights some of the issues associated with accessing entertainment. The report cites a number of successful late-night bus schemes, such as the service operated in Wolverhampton which was set up and financed by the police, nightclub owners and one of the main bus operators and is now self-financing.¹² The report also suggests that taxi-sharing schemes and minibus services like those identified by the Rural Transport Scrutiny Review could provide a more flexible alternative to scheduled bus services at night.

Another issue associated with a lack of transport late at night was that it increased the footfall in Canterbury city centre, causing disturbance to local residents.

The Panel supported the recommendation made by the Rural Transport Review, that KCC should include access to leisure as a criteria for funding. They considered this could help people to use the town centres at night who currently viewed the lack of public transport or cost of private transport as a barrier. They also agreed that the private hire and taxi schemes cited in the review could benefit people beyond those living in rural areas of the district and potentially help towards providing a service to people travelling home late at night.

¹² The Civic Trust: 'Night Vision – Town Centres for All', p76.

Recommendation 9: The private hire or taxi bus schemes identified by the Rural Transport Scrutiny Review be explored to enhance evening transport provision to entertainment in urban areas of the district.

13 Conclusion

Throughout the review, the Panel have sought to examine the entertainment provision across the district to determine if there is a good mix that suits the needs of visitors and people of all ages. They were also tasked with identifying issues surrounding the entertainment economy.

Whilst this report does not provide an exhaustive list of the entertainment facilities across the district, the Panel interviewed and gathered information from a wide range of witnesses to consider the provision and identify where there were gaps. The Panel found that people were broadly satisfied with the variety of the entertainment across the district. A wider and more diverse range of things to do was also desirable. However, it was accepted that it could be difficult for councils to influence commercial entertainment particularly in the current economic downturn.

Recommendation 10:

That the council be asked to note:

An important theme that occurred throughout the witness sessions was that the varied entertainment offer did not always extend to young people and families who could be excluded by the dominant role alcohol plays in the evening economy. Other barriers to accessing entertainment identified by the Panel were a lack of awareness of what was on offer across the district and inadequate transport in the late at night.

Effective marketing and promotion of the activities available is key to creating the sense that the district is a vibrant place to be. Knowledge of events should reach as wide a market as possible and this could mean exploring a variety of tools such as the websites, central box-office and poster boards suggested during the review. The Panel considered that a hospitable and welcoming public realm which invited visitors and workers into the city centre and towns in the evening was a marketing tool in itself.