ROCHFORD

STAGE TWO REPORT (DRAFT)

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Action Plan has been put together following the presentation of the strategy options detailed in the stage 1 report to officers and members of Rochford District Council.

At those presentations, it was agreed that the District should develop a more proactive approach to attracting and communicating with visitors by putting together an action plan based on the proposals set out in Option 2, termed "Open House". This chapter puts forward a selection of projects which could form the basis for an action plan and provides detailed information on how the initiatives can be implemented.

The content and scale of the final action plan is down to the District Council to decide in the light of available resources and the priority it wishes to accord to tourism. What follows should be seen as a menu of possible initiatives. A list of these is given in Table 1.

How the projects are presented

Projects are presented in the form of individual Project Briefs. The Project Brief format has been adopted for two main reasons:

- This is intended as a working document. The Project Briefs have been designed to be action-orientated skeletal business plans for initiatives which allow those managing each initiative to "hit the ground running"
- It is assumed that the Council will not choose to undertake all the initiatives but will select a number from the list and that the selection will be dependent on the resources available. As such, individual Project Briefs can be extracted from the Action Plan and be used independently of each other.

Each Brief has its own reference (e.g. A1, B3, C2), and the intention is that each Project Brief can stand as a single double-sided page. These are grouped under one of three broad headings:

a) Product development
b) Marketing and communication
c) Organisational

Each project brief has a common structure which sets out:

- A description of each activity
- Justification and purpose
- Who is/are the target market(s)?
- How to go about it (i.e. content and action)?
- What priority should be accorded to the activity?
- Who should take the lead and possible partners?
- Potential sources of funding (indicative only)
- Issues to do with timing and phasing
- A rough estimate of direct costs and additional staff time (expressed in person weeks) . .

There is an additional set of initiatives set out as *Section D* under the heading *Capitalising on existing initiatives*. Due to their status as existing rather than new initiatives, these are presented in summary form.

Resource implications

A summary of the projects is presented in Table 1 below. To provide an indication of the level of resources required we have estimated the average annual direct expenditure and the average annual staff commitment (in person weeks), averaged out over a five year period. In practice the resource requirements would vary from year to year as not every task (eg production of a leaflet) would need to be done each year. We should emphasis that these figures are only a very broad indication of resource commitments.

Adding up the resource implications of all the projects gives an annual average direct cost of £23,850 and an average annual staff commitment of 38.6 weeks. Allowing for leave, and time spent on internal administration this suggests that the Council could implement all of the above programme with one additional FT member of staff. This assumes that the tasks would be spread over a five year period and might mean that some projects would need to be deferred to later years. Some of the funding for projects (eg interpretive signing) could be raised from external sources. The annual budget requirement, therefore, might be less than £24,000 indicated.

Table 1 Summary of Project Briefs

	Action	Priority	Main Years	Annual Financial Implication	Annual Staff Resources (person weeks)
A	**MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**				
A1	Destination print	High	1.4	2000	1.8.
A2	Walks leaflet	High	1,2,5	£1440	2.4.
A3	Activities leaflet	High	3	£1180	1.3.
A4	Visitors' website	High	1,2,3,4,5	£30	2.4
A5	Interpretation	Med	1,2,3,4,5	£6000*	3.6
A6	Tourist information	Med	1,2	£1,000	2.6
A7	Events development and promotion	High	1,2	£8,000*	3.0
A8	Visiting friends and relatives promotion	Med	2-5	£1,200	1.6
A9	Walks leaflets downloads	Med	2	minimal	0.7
B	**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**				
B1	Increased participation in quality grading schemes	High	1,2	minimal	0.6
B2	Expanding the accommodation stock	med	2-5	minimal	1.6
B3	Develop specialised bird-watching tourism product	Med	3,4	£1000	2.0
B4	Rights of Way Improvements	Med	1,2	£400	1.4
B5	On-road cycle route	Med	1,2	£1100	2.4
B6	Heritage Trail	Med	1,2	£500	0.4
B7	Improving the activity offer	Med	1,2,3,4,5	minimal	2.0
C	**ORGANISATIONAL INITIATIVES**				
C1	Creation of a Tourism Forum	High	1,2,3,4,5	minimal	1.8
C2	Networking with public bodies and agencies	High	1,2,3,4,5	minimal	3 pw.
D	**CAPITALISING ON EXISTING INITIATIVES**				
	See Section D for descriptions of actions	Med	1.2.3,4,5	na	4

costs not necessarily falling on District Council

Project Brief

A1

A: MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

A1: DESTINATION PRINT

Description

Production of a succinct piece of print communicating Rochford's main facets of interest to visitors.

Justification and purpose

There is currently no printed visitor guide to the whole District. The District Council does produce an Official Guide and Street Atlas which contains general information about the District. However, the publication is very much targeted at residents of the District rather than visitors.

The destination leaflet should aim to provide a general overview of what the District has to offer visitors. It should centre on what visitors can actually see and do, such as attractions, towns and villages and activities. The information could also include reference to historical events and figures, even where there are little or no physical remains (e.g. HMS Beagles, Anne Boleyn, Canute and Oliver Cromwell).

Target markets

- Day visitors
- Short break and long stay visitors already in the region but not necessarily within Rochford District
- Local residents

Content and action

Suggested contents

This should be a picture-led, full colour publication with appetising imagery and text organised under a small number of themes. In terms of subject matter, the publication could cover attractions, churches, protected landscapes (SSSI's, Local Nature Reserves, RAMSAR sites etc) towns and villages, historic associations, links with famous figures and a touring map. The contents should also make reference to information on access to activities and the proposed heritage route (see Project Briefs A3 and B5 for more detail).

Format

The guide should be designed to fit the majority of leaflet racks used by tourism print distribution companies – An A3, folded to 1/3 A4 format is suggested because it allows enough space for inclusion of a map and a good amount of content but folds to a handy size.

Print run and distribution

A print run of 50,000 is proposed. Distribution should focus on targeting outlets popular with existing visitors to Rochford and neighbouring districts. Possible distribution sites include Rayleigh Megazone and karting track, Rayleigh Windmill, the Mill Arts Centre, libraries, TICs, accommodation providers and visitor attractions in neighbouring districts (e.g. Basildon, Maldon and Southend). It is recommended that distribution is handled by a professional distribution company with experience of tourism print distribution. The piece of print can also be used as a fulfilment piece for people requesting information via the *Real Essex* tourism marketing campaign run by ExDRA.

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1,4** **The leaflet should be ready for distribution in time for the start of the main 2007 visitor season (i.e. March 2007). The leaflet should be updated and reprinted every 3 years**
Who should be involved?	**We see this project being led by Rochford District Council, perhaps with some input from tourism staff at ExDra and EETB.**
Costs	**A3 leaflet folded to 1/3 A4** **Design costs: £1,500, Print costs (50,000) £2,500. An annual budget of £400 should be set aside for distribution (based on distribution of 20,000 at £20 per thousand)**
Staffing requirement	**Production of leaflet: 4 person weeks** **Management of distribution: 0.2 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**Thames Gateway** **Some revenue is possible from pursuing a sponsorship deal and/or advertising**

A2: WALKS LEAFLET

Description

Leaflet promoting Rochford District as a base for walking

Justification and purpose

At a national level, walking is the most popular activity undertaken by visitors whilst on day trips or holidays and it is certainly true that rights of way (RoW) also offer one of the best ways of accessing the District's various landscapes. The RoWs also offer the best opportunities to view the District's wildlife, particularly the regionally and nationally important bird sites located in the District. Despite this potential, walking routes are currently not strongly promoted.

This leaflet would enable better access to walking opportunities and help position Rochford as a countryside activity resource particularly for visitors staying in the more built-up surroundings of Southend District.

Target markets

- Those with an active but casual interest in walking
- Day, short break and long stay visitors already in the region but not necessarily within Rochford District
- Members of local rambling groups and Parish Paths Partnerships
- Residents of Rochford District

Content and action

Format

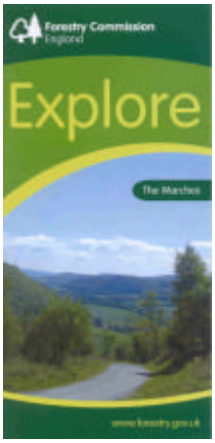
A3, folded to A5 format is recommended. The A5 format will allow more space to display maps than a 1/3 A4 format. The layout should be designed in such a way that each walk is presented on its own page. We recommend that, if photos are used, that these are reproduced in full colour. If no photos are used then 2 / 3 colour printing could be considered.

Content

It is suggested that, rather than present all walking opportunities, a limited number of circular walks are actively developed and promoted.. It is also important that the routes offer a choice of short (e.g. under 3 miles) and longer circular routes. Our suggestions for possible walks are listed overleaf. Some are existing routes already way-marked whilst others will require additional route development and/or way-marking.

We suggest that the walks are presented and packaged as a family of walks, all with a consistent design. One method of achieving this would be to using a word such as "Explore" as the main brand and then detailing the specific walk as a sub-brand. (see the Forestry Commission leaflet example overleaf).

Example of walks leaflet utilising overall "Explore" brand



- *Walk 1: Explore Rochford's enigmatic rivers:* There is a continuous, though not specifically way-marked, route which enables you to walk along the entire length of the Crouch estuary from Hullbridge to Wallasea Island and then follow a route down to the river Roach and then walk back to Rochford following the course of the River.
- Walk 2: *Explore Rochford's tranquil woodlands*. This would be the enhancement and linking of existing routes. The walk utilises existing rights of way within Hockley Woods but the longer route could take in other woodland areas.
- *Walk 3: Explore Rochford's bird paradise*. This would create a short and long circular walk around Wallasea Island. Ideally the route should link with Essex Wildlife Trust's reserves at Lion Creek and Ray Pits. The short route should make a point of linking with the ferry at Essex Marina.
- *Walk 4:Explore Rochford's beautiful and varied landscapes.* This would use and promote the Roach Valley Way - an existing way-marked 23 mile circular walk from the ancient woodlands of Hockley in the west to the costal margins of the Roach and Crouch estuaries.
- *Walk 5:* Explore Historic Rochford and Rayleigh. These two walks would take people on a tour of noteworthy buildings and locations in Rayleigh and Rochford.

As well as featuring the above walks, the leaflet should provide details of where to obtain detailed walking leaflets (e.g. parish council leaflets, woodland walks leaflets etc).

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1,2,5** **The walks should be identified, mapped and way-marked by mid 2006. The leaflet should be ready for distribution in time for the start of the main 2007 visitor season (i.e. March 2007).**
Who should be involved?	**We see this project being led by Rochford District Council, with input from the Rights of Way team at Essex County Council and tourism staff at ExDra and EETB. Parish and town councils should also be involved.**
Costs	**20,000 copies of a full colour, A3 leaflet folded to A5. Design £1,500, Printing £1,700. An annual budget of £200 should be set aside for distribution**
Staffing requirement	**Mapping: 2 person weeks** **Production of leaflet: 4.0 person weeks** **Distribution: 0.2 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**Parish and Town Councils might be eligible to apply for funding under the Parish Paths Partnership scheme** **Essex County Council, as the authority responsible for rights of way, may also be able to assist with funding** ***Walking for Health*-type bodies may also be a possible source**

A3: ACTIVITIES LEAFLET

Description

A leaflet promoting opportunities to engage in a range of outdoor activities

Justification and purpose

Rochford has some good resources for outdoor activities but the limited amount of casual access means that it is difficult for visitors to take advantage of these opportunities.

Target markets

- Members of Rochford outdoor activity facilities who might be encouraged to invite friends and relatives with similar interests to visit the District
- Visitors who are members of water-skiing, golf or fishing clubs back home
- People on break /holiday in the area who have a high propensity to return who could be encouraged to include Rochford in their itineraries on a subsequent visit
- Local residents

Content and action

Format

A3, folded to 1/3 A4

Distribution and print run:

Full colour, 10-15,000 print run, updated annually. Distribution should be to outlets popular with existing visitors and visitors to neighbouring districts. Sporting clubs in the area should also be targeted through direct mailing. Residents could be targeted by promoting the leaflet in the Council's newsletter *Rochford Matters.*

The piece of print could also be used as a fulfilment piece for people requesting activity information via the *Real Essex* tourism marketing campaign.

Content

The guide should focus on how visitors can access activity opportunities on a casual basis. The aim is to highlight opportunities that require little or no pre-planning and do not require anything other than day-membership of facilities.

Some suggested areas to cover include:

- *Wildlife watching:* Details of public access to bird reserves, charters to view seal colonies
- *Sailing:* Details of the public launch at Hullbridge; sailing lessons

- *Fishing:* How to obtain day tickets to fish at Angling Club reservoirs and lakes; locations for riverside fishing, public launch for small craft, charters available for fishing trips
- *Waterskiing:* any opportunities to take lessons or for guest membership for people who are members of waterski-clubs elsewhere
- *Horse-riding*: Stables that provide off-site hacks for visitors and/or on-site lessons for beginners
- *Golf*: Pay-and-play access to courses
- *Cycling:* details of suggested on-road cycle routes on quiet roads. Routes should include that proposed in B6. Details should include cycle hire on Burnham side of the River.

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 3** **The leaflet should be ready for distribution in time for the start of the main 2008 visitor season (i.e. March 2007). This launch date should allow time for some improvements in activity access to be negotiated *(see proposal B6)***
Who should be involved?	**We see this project being led by Rochford District Council, with input from individual enterprises involved in activities as well as regional representatives of sporting bodies.**
Costs	**10-15,000 copies of an A3 leaflet folded to 1/3 A4. Design £1.000; printing £1,500. Distribution (annual cost) £200**
Staffing requirement	**Production of leaflet: 3.5 person weeks. Updating 1.5 weeks** **Distribution: 0.5 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**There is some potential to secure revenue from advertising / and or sponsorship**

A4: VISITORS' WEBSITE

Description

A series of web-pages providing content of interest to visitors to (and residents of) Rochford District

Justification and purpose

A growing number of visitors are obtaining information on destinations prior to their arrival from the internet rather than traditional brochures. At present, Rochford has little visitor orientated web information to service this growing need. There is some good content on the District Council's website giving information about the District's parishes and attractions, but it is not designed with the needs of visitors in mind.

Target markets

- Day, short break and long stay visitors planning a trip to the region, not necessarily within Rochford District
- Friends and relatives of the residents
- Residents

Content and action

The website should aim to present similar information to that contained in the destination print, activities and walks leaflets described earlier. The greater scope for detailed content available on websites as compared with printed leaflets means that a number of additional features are proposed:

- Downloadable copies of walks leaflets and maps
- Downloadable copies of other walks such as those produced by parish and town councils and Parish Paths Partnerships
- List of where to buy "charged-for" walks publications
- Links to any local resources (e.g. parish council websites, Essex County Council Rights of Way pages, Unlock Essex's Heritage website)

Although the website could be physically hosted on the Council's website, it is recommended that the visitors are directed to the site via a distinct web address (e.g. visitrochford.org.uk). The benefits of this approach include better search engine performance.

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1,2,3,4,5** **The website should be ready for launch in time for the start of the main 2006 visitor season (i.e. March 2006).** **Regular updating of the information will be required.**

Who should be involved?	**We see this project being led by Rochford District Council.**
Costs	**Costs for the development of the website are largely dependent on whether the pages can be developed using existing resources within the Council. If this is the case then we estimate that £150 would be sufficient to pay for domain registering**
Staffing requirement	**Collation of info: 4 person weeks** **Design (assumes that existing council staff undertake design): nil** **Updating of information: 2 person weeks per annum**
Possible funding sources	**Finance will need to be found from within the Council as it is unlikely that an external source of funding will be found for this initiative**

Project Brief

A5

A5: INTERPRETATION

There are many ways to define what interpretation is, but common to all definitions is the idea of sharing with others your enthusiasm for somewhere, or something, which is significant. This initiative focuses on outdoor panels at features of interest.

Description

Development and renewal of on-site interpretation at all major natural sites, including river estuaries.

Justification and purpose

One of the District's major strengths is its natural landscape. However, at present on-site interpretation is either non-existent or likely to be outdated and in poor condition.

Target markets

- Day, short break and long stay visitors to Rochford District
- Residents of Rochford
- Visitors with an interest in natural and cultural heritage

Content and action

In the medium term, there would be considerable merit in undertaking a comprehensive audit of existing interpretation (and on-site signage) across the District and developing a strategic framework for interpretation across the District. However there are some short term actions required to address gaps in existing interpretation that have been highlighted by our initial audit and work completed by other bodies in the preparation of a number of strategic plans.

We recommend the development/ enhancement of interpretation of a number of the District's key assets:

- *Roach and Crouch Estuaries*: Work with the Crouch and Roach Estuary Project, Crouch Harbour Authority, Essex Wildlife Trust and others to identify a list of key sites (e.g. six in total). (These should include locations cited on the routes of the *Explore Rochford's Enigmatic Rivers* and *Explore Rochford's Bird Paradise* walks described in proposal A2)
- *Rayleigh Mount:* Our consultation revealed that problems with vandalism are deterring the installation of interpretation at Rayleigh Mount. We recommend that the Council offers financial and technical support to the voluntary committee that manages the Mount in order to achieve the aim of getting three interpretative panels – one within the site, one at the entrance via the Mill Theatre and Arts Centre and one at the new entrance which links the Mount to the Windmill (3 panels)

- *The Dutch Cottage:* With limited public access to the building, an outdoor panel visible from the pavement would help communicate the building's significance to a wider public (1 panel)
- *Rochford and Rayleigh:* Locations should be identified for one panel in each town. Panels should focus on towns' heritage drawn together under two or three distinct themes (2 panels)
- *Local Nature Reserves and open spaces:* Many of these sites lack interpretative panels or have panels in poor condition. We recommend that the District Council works with the relevant parish councils and other relevant bodies to provide at least one well-maintained interpretative panel at the following places. Magnolia Nature Reserve on the Ashingdon/ Hawkwell Border, Rochford Reservoir, Sweyne Park, Millview Meadows, Brooklands Gardens, Hullbridge Foreshore, Plumberow Mount, reserves managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust and The Woodland Trust (9 panels)

Design

It would be good to include some element of consistency across these interpretative boards. The Woodlands section of the District Council have already commissioned new boards for installation at Hockley Woods and consideration should be given to using these designs as a template for other locations.

Criteria

In order to guide development of interpretation at the above sites, we have included some practical tips as Appendix 1.

Priority:	**Medium**
Timing - Notes	**Main years of activity: 1- 5 This will be an ongoing activity working with partners to improve interpretation. 8**
Who should be involved?	**We see this project being co-ordinated by Rochford District Council but involving a wide range of partners. Those with management or ownership interests in the sites are key stakeholders**
Costs	**£1,000 and £2,000 is allocated for each panel. This gives a total of between £21K and £42K. We also recommend that an allocation of £1,000 per annum is devoted to maintenance and checking regimes. Replacement costs should also be considered.**
Staffing requirement	**6 person weeks to establish protocols then 3 person weeks per annum**
Possible funding sources	**The Council is acting here in a co-ordinating role rather than as the funder of this initiative. Individual land-owners and managers of the relevant sites should be encouraged to contribute towards the costs. English Nature's Reserves Enhancement Scheme and/or Section 35 National Nature Reserve Capital Grants might be a possible source for any locations within NNRs Countryside Agency and DEFRA may also be able to support the initiative in certain locations**

Project Brief

A6

A6: TOURIST INFORMATION

Description

Establishing libraries, council offices and visitor attractions as visitor information points carrying a range of visitor information.

Justification and purpose

Rochford has no tourist information centres but the relatively small number of visitors the District currently attracts means it is hard to justify the provision of dedicated information centres. Instead it is recommended that a range of locations are promoted as information points for visitors and residents.

Target markets

- Day, short break and long stay visitors to Rochford District
- Day, short break and long stay visitors passing through Rochford
- Business visitors
- Residents of Rochford
- Those visiting friends and relatives

Content and action

We recommend that a small, largely self contained information system is developed for a range of locations including libraries, Rayleigh Windmill, the Mill Arts Centre and pubs.

- Leaflets will be provided in custom displays. In order to cater for the different space availability within proposed venues, a range of display options will be offered – ranging from single table-top cardboard / Perspex leaflet dispensers to small wall and floor leaflet racks.

- Leaflets will be kept stocked by a leaflet distribution firm

- Signage of the visitor information centre for on-window/door use will be provided. Key sites (such as those in Rochford and Rayleigh) will be encouraged to host more prominent external signage featuring the nationally recognised tourist information symbol (a red i on a blue background)

As libraries in Rochford are the responsibility of Essex County Council it will be necessary to gain agreement from the County Council for the inclusion of libraries in this initiative. It should help discussions with the County Council if it can be demonstrated that the tourist information points will be self-contained and not entail extra work for staff.

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1,2** **The need for partnership working with the County**

	Council means that this plan could take 18 months to introduce. A target date of Feb 2007 is recommended.
Who should be involved?	**We see this project being kick-started by Rochford District Council but closely involving library staff from the County Council. Other partners are dependent on locations signed up to take part.**
Costs	**Capital costs £5,000 (for purchase of display equipment) Revenue: note cost of distribution is included in Project Briefs for individual pieces of print.**
Staffing requirement	**Negotiation of locations and setting up: 5 person weeks On-going staffing req: 2 person weeks per annum**
Possible funding sources	**Thames Gateway might be willing to fund this District-wide initiative. Otherwise council funding is likely to be required with few other alternative sources available**

A7: EVENTS DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

Description

Active development and promotion of events. The aim is to use events to make residents more aware of what is on offer on their doorstep and to encourage visits by their friends and relatives. There is also a knock-on positive effect on visitor markets.

Justification and purpose

Rochford District is home to around 78,500 people. Such a sizeable population offers a ready market for days out and an opportunity to use events to attract sizeable numbers of visits from outside the District from friends and family of residents.

Market trends are also promising - we know from the national trends highlighted in the Stage 1 report that those visiting friends and relatives are partly responsible for the upward trend in short breaks.

Target markets

- Residents of Rochford District
- Staying and day visitors to the region and Rochford District
- Visiting friends and relatives

Content and action

Events Development

The District already hosts a number of events that are popular with local people that could be developed to increase their profile, scope and appeal to residents wishing to invite friends and relatives to specific events as well as visitors.

- *Unlock! Rochford's History* is a one-day event that takes place in September each year. It offers a range of events and tours of historic Rochford buildings. There are already plans to add to the number of buildings included in the event but consideration should also be given to developing a similar event for other locations in the District. In particular Rayleigh is a logical next step. In order to maximise profile we recommend that the events are run on consecutive days over a weekend. In the medium and long-term, there may be scope for developing a District-wide History & Heritage Festival.
- The annual *Wild Woods* event that takes place in Hockley Woods is another popular event, but more profile could perhaps be achieved by developing this into a week-long Woodlands festival, incorporating events at a number of woodlands.
- There has already been some talk of establishing a *Living Land* event which would be a week-long event held either in summer or autumn, to promote the rural heritage of the District and educate residents and visitors as to the leisure benefits of having the countryside on their doorstep. We believe that such an event would

be a very useful way to promote the District's landscape to its residents and possible visitors. We would recommend that the event includes river-side / river-based events as well as land-based elements.

Events Promotion

At present collation of District –wide events listings is a somewhat "hit-or miss" affair. This should be changed in favour of a co-ordinated approach to gathering and disseminating events information. Collation could be done either by an officer of the Council or through the letting of a freelance contract to undertake the task. Once collated, there are a number of distribution outlets that could use the information:

- An expanded and improved *What's On* section of the Rochford District Council website (recommend redesigned listings with preview of event description rather than just the title
- Visitor-orientated version of website (see earlier section for details)
- Real Essex website (www.realessex.co.uk) (lists events for nine different geographical areas but currently contains no events listings for Rochford District)
- Council publications (e.g. *Rochford District Matters*, The RDC Tenants' magazine *Your Home)*
- Local newspapers (e.g. daily newspapers in Rayleigh, Rochford and Castle Point)

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1-5. Essentially co-ordination /pump priming role** • **2005: Talks regarding developing events with a view to instigating changes for 2006 events** • **2006:Events listings improvements**
Who should be involved?	**Events Development: There will be a range of partners for specific initiatives including Holmes Place, Crouch and Roach Estuary Project, Woodlands Section, Economic Development, Parish and Town Councils and private sector enterprises** **Events Promotion: Rochford District Council**
Costs	**Events Development: Unlock! Rochford's History £5,000 per annum; Wild Woods: £5,000 per annum; Living Land: £5,000 per annum** **Events Promotion:£1,000 per annum if freelancer employed**
Staffing requirement	**Assume 3 pw pa.** **Events Promotion: cost of employing freelancer included in costs listed above**
Possible funding sources	**Holmes Place events budget** **Thames Gateway** **Local Heritage Initiative funding for the events development**

A8: VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES PROMOTION

Description

Active promotion to residents who in turn are encouraged to invite friends and relatives.

Justification and purpose

Actively encouraging residents to invite friends and relatives to visit can be a very effective method of stimulating this market

Target markets

- Residents of Rochford District with relatives or friends living outside of the District
- Visiting friends and relatives

Content and action

The council's newspaper could be used as a vehicle for a yearly feature highlighting one or two key events around which residents are encouraged to invite friends and relatives. Discounts for restaurants etc could also be negotiated and promoted to readers, who would register by email, phone or in writing for a pack of info to be sent to them in order to pass on to friends / relatives.

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main year of activity: 2 onwards**
Who should be involved?	**Rochford District Council with third parties providing discount vouchers for use in the promotion**
Costs	**£1,500**
Staffing requirement	**2 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**Local sponsorship, in the form of discounts and/or financial contribution**

A9: WALKS LEAFLETS DOWNLOADS

Description

Electronic distribution of local, parish-level walks information

Justification and purpose

Many parishes are actively engaged in the development of local walking routes and the production of leaflets promoting them. However, financial constraints often mean that distribution of these leaflets is severely limited.

Target markets

- Residents of Rochford District
- Day and staying visitors to Rochford

Content and action

In order to overcome limited resources and in order to widen the access to these valuable resources, Rochford District Council should consider offering to provide downloadable versions of the leaflets from the Council's website. Availability of these leaflets could be promoted via the Council's newspaper and via any newsletters issued by Parish and Town Councils.

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main year of activity: 2 and ongoing**
Who should be involved?	**Rochford District Council, Parish / Town Councils, Essex County Council. Also Parish Paths Partnerships should be involved**
Costs	**Minimal**
Staffing requirement	**2 person weeks in year 2, then 0.5 weeks pa**
Possible funding sources	**Parish/ town council to donate leaflet artwork, Essex County Council to provide mapping resources where required**

Project Brief

B1

B: PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

B1: INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY GRADING SCHEMES

Description

Encourage existing accommodation providers to participate in quality assessment schemes

Purpose and justification

Rochford has little accommodation at present and what accommodation there is does not participate in quality assurance schemes. A major consequence of this is that Rochford does not feature in tourism marketing campaigns that have a policy of only promoting quality assessed accommodation (e.g. the Real Essex campaign run by ExDRA and those run by EETB). This means Rochford has a very low profile among potential visitors.

Target markets

- Providers of existing accommodation in Rochford District
- Day, short break and long stay visitors to Rochford District
- Day, short break and long stay visitors planning trips to the County and using the Real Essex/ regional tourist board website as information sources
- Business visitors

Content and action

The relatively small number of establishments within the District makes a personal approach possible and preferable. Accommodation operators should be contacted to confirm their current quality status and their attitude towards quality grading. Those contacting providers should explain the benefits of quality grading including the fact that accommodation will feature in regional and national promotion. Those contacting the establishments should also draw their attention to the new "entry-level" quality level that has been designed for providers who don't necessarily want to be star rated but do want to feature in tourist board and other public sector tourism campaigns operating an inspected-only policy.

More information about current quality schemes can be found at www.qualityintourism and in the Draft Quality Strategy for England 2005-2006, available from www.visitbritain.com/ukindustry

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1,2**
Who should be involved?	**Rochford District Council, EETB, ExDra, individual accommodation providers**

Costs	**Minimal**
Staffing requirement	**3 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**East of England Development Agency** **Rochford District Council**

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

B2: EXPAND THE ACCOMMODATION STOCK

Description

Encourage the development of more accommodation in Rochford

Purpose and justification

Rochford has little accommodation at present which constrains the amount of staying tourism the district can accommodate and reduces the potential for generating economic impact as staying visitors spend more than day visitors.

Target markets

- Providers of existing accommodation in Rochford District
- Day, short break and long stay visitors to Rochford District
- Day, short break and long stay visitors planning trips to the County and using the Real Essex/ regional tourist board website as information sources
- Business visitors

Content and action

There are two strands to this initiative. Firstly reviewing the Council's current planning policies with regard to B&B, holiday lets, caravan parks and the development of accommodation. We think that in some areas this may be unduly restrictive and there may be case for relaxing this. The current planning review provides an ideal opportunity to re-examine this.

Secondly there is a need to engage with the farming community to stimulate interest in the development of holiday accommodation in the context of farm diversification. Other possibilities include B+B in the homes of local residents, the potential for a further tourism caravan site and hotel opportunities in connection with the airport.

Caution will need to be exercised here to avoid building up unrealistic expectations before efforts have been made to stimulate demand.

Priority	**Low - medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity year 2 onwards**
Who should be involved?	**Rochford District Council, EETB, ExDra, individual accommodation providers**

Costs	**Minimal**
Staffing requirement	**2 person weeks pa.**
Possible funding sources	**East of England Development Agency** **Rochford District Council**

Project Brief

B3

B2: DEVELOP SPECIALISED BIRD-WATCHING TOURISM PRODUCT

Description

Co-ordination of a pilot project to test the market for packaged bird-watching weekends aimed at the dedicated birdwatcher.

Purpose and justification

Nature watching is increasingly popular as a holiday activity. Around 1% of all holiday trips to England where taken for the express reason of studying nature, with 16% of holiday trips included nature watching as part of the holiday[1]. Of all types of nature study, bird-watching is the most popular. There are estimated to be over 2 million birdwatchers in the UK whilst the RSPB, the UK's largest bird charity, boasts over 1 million members. At a regional level, the East of England Regional Tourism Strategy identifies bird-watching as a distinctive product that could be developed at a number of locations[2].

Rochford's bird-watching resource is strong. The coastal margins of the District provide some of the country's best estuaries and saltings for birds in the UK, with the area around the islands of Wallasea and Foulness being particularly fine.

Target markets

- Essex members of bird and wildlife organisations (e.g. RSPB, Essex Wildlife Trust)
- London and SE members of the above organisations
- People who in the past have taken birdwatching breaks or holidays in the UK
- UK and international visitors with a strong and active interest in birdwatching holidays and short breaks
- Current visitors to Nature Reserves in Rochford District

Content and action

Developing and then promoting a bird-watching tourism package is a time-consuming process and not without risk. However, the quality of the resource in Rochford District means that there is a real chance of developing a small but profitable tourism market that is in line with the sustainable tourism aspirations set out in plans such as that produced by the Crouch and Roach Estuary Project.

Information gathered during our consultations suggests that the main market lies with specialist bird-watchers rather than the more casual markets. Winter is the best time for seeing bird species in the District and as such is seen as the best time to promote packages.

Package content

We recommend the development of a small number of weekend packages. These would offer guided walks of Essex Wildlife Trust reserves in the north eastern part of the District (initial

1 UKTS 2002

2 Regional Tourism Marketing Strategy for the East of England, EEDA/EETB, May 2004

soundings suggest that the Trust would be open to such an initiative). The package might also offer bird-watching on Foulness Island if access can be agreed (the RSPB have previously run weekend trips to the island). Another attraction could be the chartering of boats to view the local seal colonies.

Accommodation

There are a number of options.

- *Existing accommodation:* There is a small number of accommodation providers in the District although very little near the main bird-watching areas. Of those within striking distance is Riverside Village Holiday Park which has tent pitches but no caravans available for rent. Further away is the Dome Guest House and further still are budget hotels such as the Travelodge and Holiday Inn Express.

- *New accommodation using existing building stock*: Another option is to open discussions with farmers to see if any would consider running B&B accommodation located near to Wallasea Marina

Marketing

Marketing should be aimed at members of relevant organisations. There appears to be a strong regional market from which to draw on. For instance, Essex Wildlife Trust has approximately 20,000 regional members whilst 40% of visitors to UK RSPB reserves are from the East of England[3]. Effective marketing methods include direct mail and advertising in specialist publications.

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**3,4** **The need for partnership working and the lack of a track record in this sector means that work will be time-consuming and will need to be considered a two- three year project to get a product "to market"**
Who should be involved?	**A core group to guide the whole project, with other stakeholders brought on-board when necessary. RDC, Essex Wildlife Trust and RSPB and the Crouch and Roach Estuary Project could form the core group.**
Costs	**For marketing the pilot £3- £5,000.**
Staffing requirement	**RDC staffing: 10 person weeks. In the medium-term, this initiative should be taken over by the private sector with perhaps some input from the proposed Tourism Forum *(see Project Brief C1 for details)***
Possible funding sources	**Business start-up grants for enterprises taking part. Farm diversification grants might also be available. Thames Gateway / DEFRA / Countryside Agency. In the medium-term we see this initiative as self-sustaining/ profit-making and so demand for funding would be short-term**

3 Information provided during interview with Richard Powell, Chief Executive, Eastern Region, RSPB

B3: RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENTS

Description

Physical improvements to the rights of way network that will encourage greater use by visitors and residents alike.

Justification and purpose

Many parishes within the District are actively engaged in maintaining and developing use of rights of way in their areas. The District has a good number of Parish Paths Partnerships – local volunteers who look after and help promote local rights of way- and these have developed local walks using existing rights of way. Many of these walks are promoted using leaflets but experience from elsewhere suggests that many people wishing to use rights of way do so as a spur of the moment decision and as such do not have maps or leaflets to guide them. Providing physical way-marking on routes is one way of encouraging greater use of these many walks developed at a parish level.

Target markets

- Residents of Rochford
- Staying and day visitors to the District

Content and action

Possible courses of action include:

- Conduct an audit of walks leaflets developed at a local level within the District
- Identify walks that either have good visitor potential and/or link to the walking routes featured in the walks leaflet proposed in an earlier section (see earlier section)
- Investigate access for people with disabilities
- Work with rights of way stakeholders to assess the current level of way-marking on these routes
- Identify positions, design and funding of way-marks for the routes
- Ensure integration with other initiatives such as on-site interpretation

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1, 2**
Who should be involved?	**Essex County Council's Rights of Way team are key partners in this, as are the various parish and town councils who have developed walks and whose routes may satisfy the relevant criteria for improved way-marking. Given the likely need for additional funding and the need to link with existing initiatives such as Local Transport Plans, meetings should also be held with the District and County's Transport and Planning**

	departments.
Costs	**Costs are likely to be in the region of £2,000 (based on 40 way-markings at £50 each)**
Staffing requirement	**RDC liaison with Essex CC: 7 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**Parish and town councils should be approached to contribute. Essex County Council may be able to part-fund via Rights of Way Improvement Plan process and/or Parish Paths Partnerships**

B4: ON-ROAD CYCLE-ROUTES

Description

Development of on-road cycle-routes.

Rationale and justification

Currently, the District lacks any significant on or off-road leisure-orientated cycle routes. This is despite both the Community and Local Transport Strategies flagging up developments in this area as an aspiration. Although the creation of off-road routes would involve considerable land negotiations, there would appear to be potential to develop one or more cycle route using some of the Districts' quieter roads.

Target markets

- Day, short break and long stay visitors to Rochford District
- Visitors based in other Districts, particularly the southern half of Maldon District and Southend District, who are interested in walking or cycling
- Residents of Rochford
- Visitors using the cycle hire facilities in Maldon

Content and action

In the short term, the area around Essex Marina would seem a sensible place to pilot an on-road cycle route for a number of reasons:

- The roads in the vicinity are, on the whole, very quiet, and lightly used
- There are few public transport options available in the area so cycling is one of the few ways (other than the private car and on foot) to explore the area
- There are existing tourist facilities located in the area (The Riverside Holiday Park and Marina). Developing a cycle route could encourage more people to explore by bike
- The Wallasea Wetlands Project will improve the extent and quality of the wetlands in this area. Reaching the area by bike fits well with sustainable tourism principles
- The cycle route could link up with the pedestrian ferry that links the Marina with Burnham. There is already a cycle hire located in Burnham and small numbers of cyclists are using the ferry to bring bikes over. The development of an on-road cycle route from this point could improve the viability of what is a fledgling cycle hire business and might also encourage more people to bring bikes across to Rochford

Route

The route needs to be carefully planned but below are some preliminary proposals are that the route:

- Includes a loop which links the ferry embarkation point at Essex Marina, The Creeksea Ferry Inn public house and Riverside Holiday Park
- Passes the footpath to the Essex Willdife Reserve at Lion Creek
- Passes through Canewdon (ideally passing the church and village lock-up)
- Links with Rochford

Signage and promotion

The route needs to be clearly marked using on-route signposting. Consideration should also be given to producing a simple guide and map which could be distributed to people hiring cycles in Burnham, those staying at Riverside Holiday Park and people using Essex Marina. Copies could also be available on the Council's website for downloading.

Future developments

In the longer term, other routes should be considered. One option is a route which links with the greenways planned for the south of District as part of the Green Grid strategy and takes people from Southend District through Little Wakering, Stonebridge and Barling (Barling Magna Community Primary School is already participating in the County Council's Safer Routes to school campaign. A new cycle route could dovetail nicely with this)

Discussions should be had with those responsible for developing cycle routes as part of the Local Transport Planning and Green Grid processes in order that it is integrated into these broader initiatives

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity:1,2** **The route needs to fit in with the publication timetable for the Destination Print *(A1)* and Activities Leaflet *(A3)***
Who should be involved?	**Essex County Council's Highways and Transportation Department and the District Council's Planning Department are key partners. Given the routes aspirations to contain links across private land (e.g. Essex Marina) there will need to be early involvement of those with land interests. It also makes sense to involve Essex Wildlife Trust and Riverside Holiday Park**
Costs	**Signposting (20 signs at £200 each = £4,000) Leaflet (print run of 5,000) £750**
Staffing requirement	**RDC 12 person weeks**
Possible funding sources	**Essex County Council through the Local Transport Plan settlement**

B5: HERITAGE TRAIL

Description

Creation of a heritage trail for cars and cyclists to help people find and enjoy the District's history.

Justification and purpose

Rochford District has strong historical and archaeological legacies but not all have physical remains that are accessible to the public and/or above ground. The result is that, perhaps with the exception of Rochford and Rayleigh, the noteworthy locations are well spread out. In order to provide a sensible way of viewing these geographically-spread heritage highlights, the development of a road-based heritage trail should be considered.

Target markets

- Car-borne /cycling day and long stay visitors to the District
- Car-borne / cycling day, short and long stay visitors to other Districts in SE Essex
- Residents of Rochford who own their bikes
- Visitors to other districts interested in heritage and/or cycling

Content and action

A suitable heritage route should be identified and actively promoted through the leaflet identified in proposal A1. Ideally, the route should pass through all the main settlements in the District. The route should be signed on the highway but it may prove difficult to fulfil current guidelines issued by the Department of Transport which state that signage for heritage routes cannot normally considered. Only routes that lead to permanent attractions with good levels of access and car parking are considered.

Possible locations to highlight on the route include:

- Canewdon (churches , links with Henry V, witches, Canute, World War II radar station site and pillboxes)
- Raleigh Mount and Windmill
- Ann Boyeln (Rochford Hall)
- Rochford

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity: 1** **This route is to feature in the main destination print due to be published in 2007. Work on the route and its interpretation will therefore be concentrated in 2005 and 2006.**
Who should be	**Essex County Council's Highways and**

involved?	**Transportation Department will be an important partner. The Planning Department has recently commissioned a heritage characterisation of the District as well as a number of village heritage assessments and are thus likely to be able to provide valuable contribution to the debate as to locations. The County Council's Historic Landscape branch should also be consulted over the choice of locations.**
Costs	**Costs of leaflet included in Proposal A1. Route research: £2,500 to commission writing of text on main sites.**
Staffing requirement	**Research of route: 2 person weeks** **Leaflet: included as part of Proposal A1**
Possible funding sources	**Local Heritage Initiative, Heritage Lottery Fund**

Project Brief

B7

B6: IMPROVING THE ACTIVITY OFFER

Description

Working with operators to facilitate improved casual access and opportunities for water recreation (novice training, weekend courses), horse riding (off-road hacks), golf (pay and play) etc.

Rationale and justification

Rochford District has a good number outdoor activity opportunities that are of interest to visitors. However, access to these by visitors who are on day trips or holidays is often limited due to the predominance of membership orientated structures. In order to open up the resources to visitor markets, it is recommended that a co-ordinated programme of dialogue with relevant clubs and operators is undertaken. In general terms, the discussions should seek to create more casual forms of access requiring little or no pre-booking. Emphasis should be placed on gaining access during the main holiday season and at weekends. Where agreements can be reached, operators should be offered the incentive of enhanced profile in the proposed activities leaflet.

Target markets

- Members of Rochford outdoor activity facilities who might be encouraged to invite friends and relatives with similar interests to visit the District
- Visitors to Rochford who are members of water-skiing, golf or fishing clubs back home
- Visitors to Southend and Maldon who are members of water-skiing, golf or fishing clubs back home
- Short break and long stay visitors to Southend with an interest in trying horse-riding and/or sailing and/or golf
- People on break /holiday in the area who have a high propensity to return who could be encouraged to include Rochford in their itineraries on a subsequent visit

Content and action

Although the type of casual access that has most visitor potential should be identified and discussed in detail with stakeholders associated with each activity, some suggested areas for discussion might include:

Golf

- pay and play access at weekends

Horse-riding

- on-site tuition for beginners
- beginners' hacks

- Supervised riding experiences on farms which have diversified to include green tracks for riding

Waterskiing

- Waterski-ing lessons for beginners
- Boat and driver hire for experienced waterskiers who are members of British Water Ski affiliated clubs in their home area
- Boat hire for those with a British Waterski Ski Boat driver certificate

Sailing

- Dinghy and canoe hire
- Sailing classes for beginners
- There is also a need to discuss further the issue of increasing the number of public slipways within the District

Fishing

- Further opening access to inland waters managed by angling clubs
- Exploring the issue of providing more points for fishing the estuaries
- Better promotion of charter boats offering fishing trips

Priority	**Medium**
Timing	**Main years of activity:1.2.3.4.5** **1 activity per year**
Who should be involved?	**RDC should play a facilitating role. Relevant stakeholders should be brought together to discuss issues and agree any possible ways forward.**
Costs	**Minimal**
Staffing requirement	**2 person weeks pa**
Possible funding sources	**Sport England lottery funding** **Thames Gateway is interested in boosting opportunities for activity tourism.**

Project Brief

C1

C: ORGANISATIONAL INITIATIVES

C1: CREATION OF A TOURISM FORUM

Description

The establishment of a permanent forum of interested stakeholders to discuss matters relating to tourism activity and development in Rochford.

Rationale and justification

Despite the fact that there is currently a low level of tourism in the District, there are already a number of companies and organisations whose existence is linked to tourism revenues. These include accommodation providers, those managing heritage, natural and visitor attractions, conference facilities and infrastructure owners (e.g. Southend Airport). At present there is no formal mechanism in place for these people to communicate with each other or with bodies such as the District and County Councils.

The establishment of a permanent forum made up of such stakeholders would provide a useful way to disseminate relevant information and to champion the action items arising from this report. The networking and informal social aspects of the groups should also not be underestimated.

Target markets

- Businesses that are involved in tourism
- Businesses that could benefit from tourism
- Public agencies with tourism remits

Content and action

- The size of the Forum should be kept manageable (max of 20)
- The private sector should have at least 50% of places on the Forum
- The meetings should be held at different locations across the District
- Secretarial support should be provided
- Stakeholders not wishing to sign up to formal meetings should be offered regular email updates on tourism issues
- The Forum should create its own action items only where it seems sensible to do so

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity 1,2,3,4,5**

Who should be involved?	**In the short term, RDC will need to pull together relevant stakeholders. In the longer term, the Forum should only require some secretariat support from RDC.**
Costs	**Minimal, although in the longer term consideration could be given to developing the Forum as a Local Delivery Vehicle for Thames Gateway tourism-related funding and securing a revenue budget.**
Staffing requirement	**Setting up: 5 person weeks** **Secretariat support: 1 person week per annum**
Possible funding sources	**Thames Gateway South Essex, local Chambers of Commerce or Business Link might be interested in supporting this private sector-led initiative**

Project Brief

C2

C2: NETWORKING WITH PUBLIC BODIES & AGENCIES

Description

Opening up a dialogue with the other districts, counties and bodies to look at the potential for collaboration on tourism initiatives.

Rationale and justification

As Rochford District seeks to develop its visitor profile there will be a growing need to work with others outside the District in order to effectively target potential visitors.

Target markets

- Maldon District Council
- Southend on Sea Borough Council
- Essex Development and Regeneration Agency

Content and action

Although the list of possible linkages below is not intended to be exhaustive it does provide some pointers as to what are some of the important links that need to be made.

Southend District

Rochford lies next to Southend – one of the UK's most popular coastal resorts attracting 6.1m day trips and significant amounts of short break and long holiday takers. However, despite its proximity, the District sees little in the way of tourism spin-offs from Southend. Our consultations revealed an ambivalent attitude towards Southend. There were some who felt that partnership working between Rochford and Southend might be difficult because of Southend's dominance in tourism terms. There was also a view that the Rochford's appeal was very different to Southend and as a result there was little market overlap. Others felt that it folly to ignore such a powerful neighbour and that benefit could accrue from attracting even a small number of Southend visitors.

Despite these differing views, it appears likely that the District's greater engagement in tourism markets advocated in this report will require a more proactive approach to relations with Southend. The following are some of the suggested steps:

- Consider developing an "as and when required" dialogue rather than establishing a regular meeting schedule. This will help minimise the resources required to service this relationship and will ensure that the two parties meet only when there is a need to do so. Providing a reason to be in a room together will ensure any meetings remain solution and action-orientated.

- Make initial contact with the Tourism, Marketing and Special Events Manager at Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to suggest improved dialogue and the proposed way forward

- Be aware that a range of departments might need to be involved in cross-authority talks. One officer within Rochford District Council should be responsible for pulling parties together
- Possible items to explore mutual benefit include Southend Air Show, Green Grid proposals, harmonising brown on white signage, plans for airport expansion, approaches to Thames Gateway initiatives

Maldon District Council

Maldon District lies just to the north of Rochford across the river Crouch. In recent years the District has become increasingly active in rural tourism and has developed a number of tourism initiatives focused on countryside and outdoor recreational activities. The District has also been active in working in partnership with a number of consortia including a new grouping of Essex coastal destinations.

With its close strategic and geographic proximity it makes sense for Rochford to seek closer ties with Maldon. Areas of mutual interest that could be explored include:

- Issues surrounding the pedestrian ferry service that runs between Burnham (Maldon District) and Essex Marina (Rochford District)
- Improve levels of Rochford product knowledge amongst TIC staff in the Community and Tourist Information Centre in Burnham
- Provide leaflets (e.g. the proposed Rochford destination, activities and walking leaflets) to the Community and Tourist Information Centre in Burnham
- Work with the cycle hire firm in Burnham on strengthening the position of the business and encouraging visits on the ferry
- Explore how Rochford could benefit from major events held in Burnham such as the regatta and carnival (perhaps through complimentary events developed on the Rochford side of the river)
- Work with the Crouch and Roach Estuary Project on moving forward with tourism proposals contained in their strategy document. Areas of interest include public launches for PWC, moorings policy and interpretation
- Work with Maldon on selective joint promotions (e.g. co-ordination of promotions of boat trips to see the seal colonies)

Essex Development and Regeneration Agency

The main tourism campaign run at a County level is co-ordinated by the Essex Development and Regeneration Agency (ExDRA). The campaign, called *Real Essex*, uses a series of products to promote the County to out of county visitors. These include churches, gardens, seaside art design and architecture. Although Rochford is a member of ExDRA's campaign, the District's profile within current campaigns is very low. The difficulty of collating and sending event information to ExDra means the District's events are not listed whilst the lack of any quality assessed accommodation means that no District accommodation is promoted.

Recommendations made elsewhere in this report are aimed at addressing some of the underlying causes of Rochford's low profile in the Real Essex campaign, but once these weaknesses are addressed, there is an opportunity to become a more active member of the Real Essex campaign.

- Ensure events listings are sent to ExDra
- Ensure that good photos and copy is provided so that churches in Rochford can benefit from inclusion in ExDRA's churches promotion
- Ensure that accommodation providers who agree to become quality assured receive the benefits of ExDRA's print and web campaigns
- Ensure that a selection of eating places are listed on ExDRA's website and in print
- Provide feature ideas for ExDRA's new magazine REview

Priority	**High**
Timing	**Main years of activity 1,2,3,4,5**
Who should be involved?	**A number of departments from RDC may be involved in discussions**
Costs	**Minimal**
Staffing requirement	**On going dialogue: 3 person weeks per annum**
Sources of funding	**Thames Gateway South Essex may be interested in funding joint projects between Southend and Rochford**

D: CAPITALISING ON EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES

In addition the initiatives proposed in the preceding three sections, there are a number of areas where new initiatives are not necessarily required. Instead there is a need to ensure that maximum tourism and resident benefit is derived from a range of existing opportunities. This section presents the main areas where this condition applies.

We have allowed 4 person weeks pa to pursue these various ongoing initiatives.

D1: Southend Airport

The airport has plans to expand into a major regional with a new terminal, hotel/ conference and visitor centre. Forecasts predict that the airport could be catering for 800K passengers by 2006 and 2.5m by 2030[4]. The Council is supportive of expansion and has already granted planning permission for the new terminal building and railway station. Public consultation on plans for the airport commenced in April 2005 with the terminal expected to be complete by the end of 2006.

Expansion at the airport could significantly increase the amount of business tourism in the District, with knock-on effects for demand for accommodation, particularly in terms of hotels.

Without jeopardising its ability to act without prejudice as the local planning authority, the District Council should seek to maintain an on-going dialogue with the airport management in order to be kept up to date with developments. If expansion at the airport is agreed, then the Council should further increase its contact in order to ensure it is proactively engaging. Guiding this engagement should be a number of questions:

- How should developments at the airport be integrated into other plans for the District?
- How can developments be used to develop tourism and in particular business tourism across the District?
- Are additional resources (both financial and personnel) required in order to respond to the tourism (and other) opportunities and challenges created by any expansion at the airport?

D2: The Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid Strategy

Part of Thames Gateway project, the South Essex Green Grid Strategy was published in March 2005 and is a 25 to 30 year plan that aims to link every resident with townscapes, landscapes and riverscapes by a variety of open spaces. As well as offering benefits for residents, the development of greenways – routes for cyclists, walkers and horse-riders linking Rochford to Southend - has the potential to provide better access to the District's countryside from those living and visiting Southend District. However, with such an ambitious programme spread across the whole of South Essex and beyond, there is a need to ensure that the District gains maximum benefit from the scheme and does not lose out to authorities with more resources to oversee the plan.

Involvement with the Green Grid strategy is overseen by a member of staff within the Planning Policy section of the Council. They attend the Green Grid Steering Group on behalf

4 London Southend Airport, Draft Masterplan for Consultation, April 2005,

of the Council with additional input on specific issues provided by the Woodlands section. Our consultation revealed a possible need for the Council to be more proactive in developing detailed proposals so that when funding becomes available through the Green Grid process, Rochford is in a position to submit a coherent bid. Given limited staffing resources, consideration may need to be given to employing consultants to work up proposals.

D3: Improving brown tourism signage

At present there is little “brown tourist-type” road signage in the District. Some attractions, such as the Rayleigh Megazone and Go-Karting, are well signposted but these are the exception rather than the rule. Resources such as Hockley Woods are not signed in such a way and can easily be missed by those not familiar with the entry points. Improving signposting would help direct people safely to such resources and, as a by-product, help to promote, key attractions that might be of interest to visitors.

Our consultations revealed that the County Council is currently reviewing the policy for brown and white signs and as part of this have undertaken an audit of existing brown signs. Representatives from Rochford should meet with those responsible for brown tourist signage (Cassandra Robinson) to identify the criteria required for new signs, draw up potential destinations and ask the County Council to undertake an initial site assessment prior to the District Council submitting any formal application. In drawing up lists of venues to be signposted, consideration will need to be given to the fact that providing signs to particularly environmentally-sensitive sites might not be advisable.

APPENDIX 1 – CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING INTERPRETATION

The following information is intended to provide practical guidance and inspiration for those charged with developing the interpretative initiatives laid out in this report.

Things to bear in mind

Interpretation should…

- Provoke thought. Interpretation can provoke ideas, perhaps even jolt people into a completely new understanding of what they have come to see (Information just gives facts).
- Relate to its audience
- Reveal a new insight into what makes a place special – a new understanding

Questions you should ask

- Why do you want to provide interpretation?
- What are you going to interpret?
- Who is it for?
- How are you going to do it?
- Who will own the interpretation, and make sure
- it is properly maintained or delivered?
- How will you know if you have achieved what
- you wanted to do?

Some practicalities

Layout and design

- Be concise - restrict text to under 200 words per panel
- Decide on just two or three points you want to get across and summarise them in a clear theme
- Don't use illustrations just to fill up space, leave space to breathe
- Display text needs to be at least 8mm high
- Arrange text in block paragraphs of about 50 words
- Use headings to attract attention
- Always check and choose colours outdoors as they look quite different indoors
- Be very careful about white backgrounds – it can glare and be too noticeable from far away

Construction and maintenance

- Consider whether to use an upright or an angled panel – lecturn style is best

- Choose materials that are in keeping with the natural environment
- Ensure that someone will check the panel regularly and clean repair or remove if necessary
- If possible mount a panel onto an exiting structure such as a wall rather than make a separate structure
- Do not put up panels which obscure the view

Information adapted from *A Sense of Place – An Interpretative Planning Handbook.*