



northwest  
development agency

# A Strategy for Major Events in England's Northwest

March 2004



INVESTING IN  
englandsnorthwest

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Commonwealth Games

Manchester, 25 July - 4 August 2002



# 1. Introduction

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) recognises that developing and marketing the region's image is an important strategic objective for the future regeneration of England's Northwest. The RES identifies the implementation of a major events strategy for the region as a key activity in the delivery of this objective.

The Regional Tourism Strategy also highlights the important role that major events have to play in the areas of tourism, image development, and regeneration. Major events will attract more business and leisure visitors to the region, will help to tackle negative perceptions and highlight the region's assets.

The importance of major events is already recognised in the region. The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester and Liverpool's successful bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008 helped to improve, not just the image of the host cities, but of the wider Northwest.

Major events do not offer the Northwest a panacea for economic change, but represent part of the solution. The Northwest is the first region in England to develop a Major Events Strategy. It will result in a world-class programme of events that are distinctive and capable of attracting large numbers of visitors from outside the region or significantly enhance the profile of the region.

According to the Leisure Industry Research Centre, there are 450 major events held annually in the UK worth around £1bn to the national economy. This strategy focuses on **major** events, those of sufficient scale to make an important impact upon the region's economy. A variety of smaller events already exist and flourish throughout the Northwest. This strategy will complement these existing activities and, in some cases, afford them the opportunity for growth.

In preparing this strategy, the NWDA, in conjunction with its partners, commissioned a group of independent experts with international event marketing experience. The expert team consulted with more than 300 people and organisations from throughout the Northwest and beyond. A Regional Steering Group was formed to provide local and representative insight to the direction taken.

Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the major events industry, specific event proposals and related information have deliberately not been included in the published version of this strategy and will remain confidential to those who are responsible for its implementation.



European Capital of Culture  
Liverpool, 2008

## 2. Context

England's Northwest has much to offer. The region's diverse environment and population make it a unique location for the hosting of major events. In addition, research undertaken by MORI in the Autumn of 2003 confirmed that residents, businesses and opinion leaders identify strongly with the Northwest.

This strong sense of identity is reflected in the widespread support to develop the region's economy and image through a Major Events Strategy.

Many of the region's brand leaders, including Manchester United and the Grand National, are recognised across the world. There are opportunities to exploit these brands further and complement the tourism attack and development brands of Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, the Lake District and Blackpool.

The Northwest has world-class venues and an excellent built and natural environment. Further capital investment such as the recently completed Athletics Stadium at Manchester's Sportcity and planned developments in Liverpool (King's Dock) and Blackpool will add to this event infrastructure. There are however shortfalls in provision such as sufficiently scaled quality convention facilities to host significant international business events.

The region has an excellent track record of regularly hosting highly successful major events such as the Grand National and the Open Golf Championships, as well as one-off events such as the Commonwealth Games. The result is that the region has a high level of credibility with national government and national and international rights holders. The region therefore has an excellent platform on which to build its Major Events Strategy.

The region has gained a significant legacy from the hosting of these major events, especially the Commonwealth Games. As well as the direct economic and infrastructure benefits derived from the Games, there have been a number of other supporting mechanisms which have been sustained and developed, such as the Games Volunteer Project and the Business Club. This legacy and the experience gained by the region have the potential to be further developed to support future major events.

The region now needs to ensure that it retains the skills and knowledge acquired from its investment in major events. There are a wide range of organisations with an interest in major events and it is important that they continue to work together for the benefit of the whole region and that they develop further their national and international networks and influence.

Grand National  
Held every Spring at Aintree



### 3. Objectives

“We will have a reputation for the most famous events in the UK and Europe. This will be delivered through careful regional co-ordination and professionalism in the bidding process, capturing and building on our experiences.” (The Tourism Vision for England’s Northwest)

This statement reflects the spirit of the vision for the Major Events Strategy. The overall aim for developing this strategy is to maximise the contribution that major events can make to the image, economy and tourism potential of England’s Northwest.

Specifically, the objectives for the Strategy are:

- To ensure that the region can take maximum advantage of, and be adequately prepared for, staging and bidding for major events
- As far as is reasonably practicable, to manage intra-regional competition to avoid wasted effort and resource

- To develop regional mechanisms for sharing and developing expertise in the staging and bidding for major events
- To develop evaluation tools to consistently measure the impact of major events and guide investment decisions
- To provide a strategic framework to support bids to national and international organisations for the funding of major events in the Northwest
- To maximise the opportunities to secure engagement and funding from the public and private sectors



## 4. Impact Assessment

A common challenge facing all policy makers who are responsible for allocating resources for major events is that demand inevitably outstrips supply. Funds allocated for major events are subject to competing claims from a variety of external sources and between different major events themselves. It is essential therefore, that there is a robust and consistent methodology for forecasting and measuring the impact and value for money of the investment in specific events.

Event organisers and promoters employ a range of different methodologies to evaluate the benefit of a major event, and impact assessment reports very often have a different emphasis dependant on their intended audience. In addition there is considerable debate between economists regarding the validity of multipliers that should be used to calculate an economic impact of a major event. Consequently, there is the potential for the same event to report different economic impacts.

By their very nature many beneficial characteristics of major events are not precisely measurable. These will include social impacts such as community development, civic pride as well as commercial impacts such as development and construction expenditure, additional trade and business development, and increased property values.

The key measurable beneficial characteristics of major events include:

- **Economic benefits.**  
Measured by the incremental value added to the Northwest economy, this is an event's contribution to gross regional value added. It is a composite measure of the tourism and commercial benefits proxied by newly injected spending - all new spending consequent upon and legitimately attributable to an event that remains in the Northwest regional economy. Consequently, regional major events will need to maximise the number of participants, spectators and other visitors who are from outside the Northwest region.
- **Media benefits.**  
Holding a major event, convention or exhibition in the Northwest may provide free, short term publicity for the area. The value of such publicity may be estimated from the promotion expenditure saved and cost of advertising saved. Publicity may also enhance awareness of the destination and present a favourable image to potential tourists, leading to increased visitor numbers and associated expenditure over the longer term. This can be measured by the expected volume of future tourism.



### Conferences

CBI National Conference, Manchester,  
24-26 November 2002.

Labour Party Spring Conference, Manchester  
12-13 March 2004.

SeaTrade Cruise UK Workshop, Liverpool  
10-12 January 2005

Society of American Travel Writers Conference, Manchester  
5-10 October 2007

Global experience suggests that sport is the event sector most likely to yield significant economic returns. However, other areas of event activity are also capable of achieving significant returns such as the arts, culture, festivals and business. Indicative measures of the economic impact of such sub-sectors is partially reflected in the levels of sponsorship within different event categories.

- Global events sponsorship in 2002 was worth £5.26bn of which the largest categories were:

Sport	- £3.53bn (67%)
Festivals	- £0.42bn (8%)
Arts	- £0.31bn (6%)

As well as the two key areas of economic and media value, there are potentially a range of other quantitative and qualitative factors that could be taken into account in assessing the impact of major events. These could include: jobs created, visitor bed nights, contribution to regional business and regeneration priorities.

These need to be considered along with their potential weighting, and the desirability or otherwise to use data and methodologies from other national or regional organisations e.g. VisitBritain, UK Sport, etc. In addition, there will need to be a synergy with existing local and regional public sector accountability processes.

As well as measuring the gross impact of major events, individual public sector organisations will also need to consider performance indicators which measure their return on investment. Whilst it is not possible to take all factors into account, it is possible to quantify rates of investment in relation to economic impact and media value. These performance indicators will provide a guide to where investment can attract the greatest return and will be invaluable where there are competing demands for resources. Naturally, there will be other factors which will need to be taken into account in these investment decisions.



# 5. Key Issues

## 5.1 The Role of the Public Sector

Governments around the world increasingly play an active role in bidding for, funding and hosting major events.

This government-led 'global events industry' is characterised by high degrees of competitiveness to seek out and secure the best event product available and by levels of public sector investment commensurate with the task. The Northwest will have to match or exceed the efforts of its established and developing competition if it is to succeed in the international arena.

### Key actions:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach to bidding for, developing, managing and securing events across the Northwest
- Work to secure on-going support from regional public sector leaders with appropriate resources and expertise to assist in the delivery of the Major Events Strategy
- Seek out partnerships with and benefit from London's 2012 Olympic Games bid and should this bid be successful, the Games themselves
- Develop a regional capacity to implement the strategy, adapting when necessary to the constantly changing dynamics of the marketplace
- Maintain, consolidate and analyse information about events in the region with a view to understanding better the region's level of event activity and to measure the impact of this activity

## 5.2 The Role of the Private Sector

Historically, the private sector has been engaged in the context of "business tourism" (i.e. conferences) or as "event sponsors". However, the scope for the private sector to contribute to and support the Major Events Strategy is significant, and extends further than tourism and sponsorship. The key to achieving this will be to include the private sector in the implementation of the strategy.

### Key actions:

- Engage with the private sector to develop specific major events which provide the cluster industries identified within the RES the opportunity to showcase or develop their business
- Encourage the private sector to engage in existing and future events and be involved in developing mutually beneficial opportunities
- Seek on-going support from the region's business leaders, such as the North West Business Leadership Team, in implementing the strategy
- Develop a series of sporting, cultural and business event 'Winning Themes', in which events offer a direct link between the region's tourism and economic strategies

### 5.3 Core Marketing Proposition

The evolving international events environment underlines the need for the region to develop a distinctive and highly relevant positioning statement in the market.

To achieve this, it will be necessary to position England's Northwest as a world-class venue for a diverse, inspirational and exciting range of international sporting, cultural and business events. It needs to be credible for stakeholders, achievable and realistic. It needs to sell the very best of what the region as a whole has to offer and yet not over promise.

A core marketing proposition is proposed which is both competitive and supportable at a local, European and global level:

"England's Northwest – a winning region"

#### Key actions:

- Play to the region's strengths and its unique values and encourage the staging of events in a style that reflects the region's unique characteristics and brand proposition
- Build on the approach identified in the Region's Tourism Strategy, exploiting positioning opportunities relating to:
  - Attack brands
  - Development brands
  - Slipstream brands
  - Winning themes
- Develop the brand position in relation to the events market and integrate this within the overall regional marketing strategy

### 5.4 Event Support

Deciding which events to support is not an easy or straightforward process as there are a number of factors which need to be considered including a consistent measurement of the impact of events.

It is helpful to determine a broad definition of a major event and a practical and transparent definition is proposed which concentrates on the objective assessment of the combined value of economic and media benefits.

While using this major event definition as the basis of event selection, this should be supported by careful qualitative assessment that includes factors of relevance to the portfolio approach recommended in this Strategy. An 'Event Decision Support Tool' is recommended to supplement the investment decision-making process which will bring together the quantitative and qualitative elements.

#### Key actions:

- Initially, use a definition of a major event as one where the combined value of media and economic benefits, using a standard formula, is normally at least equal to £1m (this figure is likely to be reviewed over time following implementation and practical application)
- Develop an 'Event Decision Support Tool' which takes into account both quantitative and qualitative elements
- Develop a consistent objective process for the measurement of economic and media values and develop performance indicators to measure rate of return on investment
- Develop a balanced events portfolio consisting of a co-coordinated schedule of existing and targeted events to achieve specific objectives of the Major Events Strategy and RES

## 5. Key Issues (continued)

### 5.5 Planned Event Portfolio

A three-tiered approach is recommended in the development of an events portfolio under which specific event proposals can be developed:

#### Global Giants

The Northwest has a number of major events which are of unquestioned global significance and receive world-wide coverage. These will include the Grand National, Premiership Football and The Open Golf Championships. These events are not significant because they require funding but because of their capacity to act as 'flagships' for the region. The strength, durability and unparalleled quality of these events should be used to benchmark and define what the region has to offer and what it aspires to in the global events industry.

#### Organic Excellence

This event grouping covers events that the Northwest can own, nurture and grow into world-class events that reflect the region's unique character. Central to this group will be existing or proposed events which can evolve and grow to meet the desired economic and other characteristics of the strategy within a reasonable

time period. This is felt to be particularly important in the arts, cultural, lifestyle and festivals sector where stakeholders have repeatedly expressed the desire to see homegrown, organic events be given the opportunity to develop rather than importing events from outside the region. This desire must be balanced with the assurance that such events will soon meet the event impact criteria if they are to be considered for investment and development.

#### Attack Zone

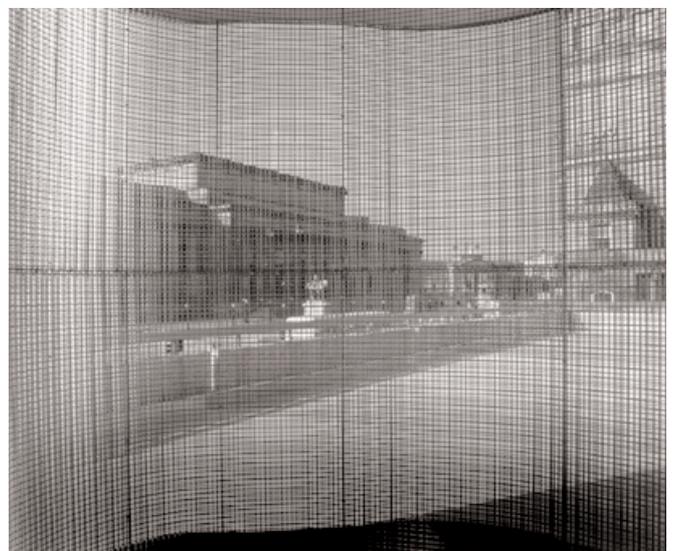
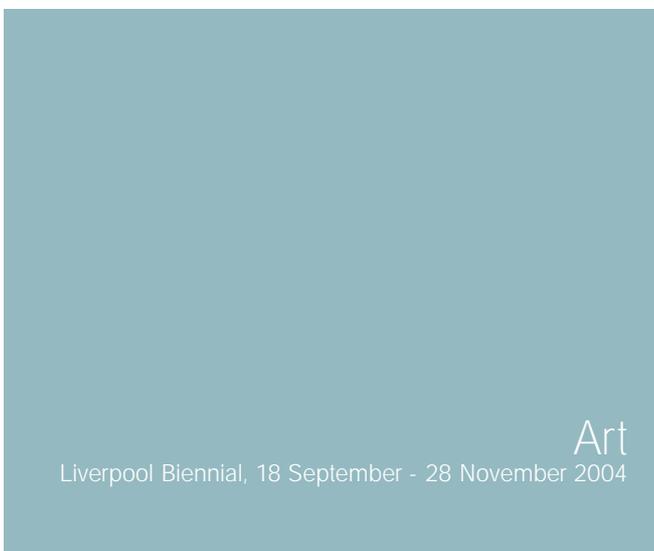
The 'attack zone' will consist of existing world-class events with a proven record in delivering specific economic targets or high profile value. Rights to host these events would normally be won through a successful international (or, on occasion, national) bidding process.

This sector is particularly significant in sport and business events. Aside from the capacity to make reasonable investment assumptions based on the event's history, this sector also offers the important opportunity for 'quick wins' that will help further establish the region's reputation in the global events marketplace.



#### Key actions:

- Develop a portfolio of events which:
  - Builds on the marketing proposition
  - Complements the 'Winning Themes' concept
  - Establishes clear targets in line with the three-tiered approach of Global Giants, Organic Excellence and Attack Zone
- Develop an events portfolio which will focus initially on events which can optimise the use of existing venues (built and natural) or those venues currently deemed 'likely developments'
- Consider the region as a whole as well as individual cities and sub-regions and balance these two dimensions through the events portfolio and resulting resource allocations. This balance must also encourage the competitive edge of the strongest elements (such as Liverpool and Manchester) and not diminish the whole proposition in search of inclusivity.
- Consider the creation and ownership of events by the region and securing some significant 'quick wins' and ensuring wherever possible that events can be spread throughout the year
- Develop processes to assist the management of intra-regional competition
- Develop a broad portfolio of events including arts, culture and business but recognising that sports events will be a major economic focus of the strategy
- Explore and exploit the partnership opportunities identified with several of the region's brand leaders, for example Premiership Football Clubs who have indicated their support for the Major Events Strategy
- Develop collaborative partnerships with appropriate countries or regions particularly where they have event development organisations and where there is an opportunity to share knowledge and experience
- Where appropriate, examine the opportunities for bundling smaller events under an umbrella (theme, geographic or time) which gives these events the ability to create a greater impact and benefit from economies of scale and collective promotions



## 5. Key Issues (continued)

### 5.6 Venues and Infrastructure

The approach taken in preparing this report and its associated recommendations has been developed as a result of analysis, consultation and with due consideration to the regeneration agenda of the region. Events should not lead regeneration but rather complement and support development initiatives. At times major events can act as a catalyst to undertake urban development (e.g. Manchester and the 2002 Commonwealth Games) including venue development, but these events should be considered in the longer term and broader context of community needs.

The focus is, therefore, to identify existing venue assets in the region, to anticipate planned development and consider how this may impact on the events strategy.

A Capital Investment Strategy, commissioned by England's Northwest Cultural Consortium, is currently under development. As part of this work a regional mapping exercise was undertaken to identify planned and potential capital investment projects in the cultural sector. Those most likely to impact on this Strategy are the £300m King's Dock Development in Liverpool (including a 1,500 capacity convention centre and a 10,000 seat indoor arena), and £400m investment planned for the Blackpool Renaissance. These developments in particular have the capacity to add to the region's major events capabilities.

Other infrastructure support services will have a direct impact on the success of major events e.g. efficient transport infrastructure, accommodation capacity both in terms of quality and quantity, high levels of service standards, etc. These issues have already been identified as key areas in the Region's Tourism Strategy and are equally important to the success of the Major Events Strategy.

#### Key actions:

- Carry out an analysis of venues capable of hosting major events and assess future regional venue needs as the Major Events Strategy begins to mature
- Select events which optimise utilisation of existing venues whilst recognising the opportunity presented by temporary and portable infrastructure solutions
- Work closely through the Regional Tourism Forum to improve the capability of tourism service providers to support the delivery of major events
- Explore major event opportunities using the region's natural landscape and coastline which could be a central feature of the emerging planned events portfolio



## 5.7 Delivery Mechanism

The global events industry is both highly specialised and highly competitive, one where risk and reward reflect more the world of business than the world of government. It will be essential to develop, sustain and reinforce the region's competitive edge in the development, implementation and evaluation of major events. This will be achieved through the acquisition and sharing of networks, knowledge, influence, expertise and experience.

Whilst this strategy recognises the significant potential contribution of the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) sector, the delivery mechanism of this area of the events industry is too highly specialised to be effectively handled within a broad events management portfolio. However, there should be close associations between any regional delivery mechanisms for MICE and the regional delivery of other major events.

### Key actions:

- Seek to co-ordinate the implementation of the Major Events Strategy and liaise with regional and external partners accordingly. The NWDA will take a lead role in this co-ordination
- Work with key stakeholders in the implementation of the Major Events Strategy to ensure that the policies of each stakeholder complement rather than compete with one another
- Work through the Regional Tourism Forum and Regional Marketing Forum in the development and implementation of the strategy
- Establish a regional mechanism to co-ordinate the delivery of the Major Events Strategy. Due to their resources, influence and current activity, Liverpool, Manchester and the NWDA must each play a significant role in this if it is to be successful
- Evaluate separately the benefits of a regional approach to Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions, or specific elements of this sector, recognising the need for close links with this Major Events Strategy

RHS Tatton Flower Show  
Held each Summer in Cheshire



## 5. Key Issues (continued)

### 5.8 Funding

Funding levels need to be appropriate, taking into account the marketplace in which the region will have to compete. Around the world, governments acknowledge increasingly the economic, social and environmental role that major events play in the lives of the community – and are prepared to invest accordingly.

#### Key actions:

- Liaise with key regional organisations to consider how the development of major events can be financially supported. The NWDA has established a 3 year budget to assist the strategic development of major events
- Work with regional organisations to consider specific one-off initiatives from time to time where the returns and risk suggest this is appropriate
- Encourage sub-regional organisations to support local events which can demonstrate their contribution to the local (rather than regional) economy and/or other local priorities



World Mountain  
Running Masters  
Keswick 11-12 September 2005

## 6. Views of Regional Stakeholders

Over 300 stakeholders were consulted over the preparation of this report representing a broad range of current and potential local, regional, national and international organisations with the capacity to contribute to and/or benefit from a Major Events Strategy.

There is widespread agreement in the Northwest that major events are important regional growth drivers. The consultation process highlighted a shared sense of hope, expectation and purpose from stakeholders. A number of key regional strengths were highlighted, most importantly the diverse and high quality range of locations and venues across the Northwest.

The region has both the leadership and partnerships necessary to deliver major events. Partners are keen to coordinate, collaborate and cooperate more.

Partners highlighted the value the Major Events Strategy will add to the region in terms of an accumulation of knowledge, expertise and new networks. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring that sufficient funding is available to attract Major Events in order to allow the region to become a serious international player.



Europride  
Manchester, 20-30 August 2003

## 7. Conclusions and Next Steps

The Major Events Strategy sets out a comprehensive and exciting vision for England's Northwest that will drive the region's ambition, capitalise on its strengths and specific values, and create a unique position for the region in the global events marketplace.

The next steps in developing the strategy will be:

- The Regional Major Events Steering Group will be reviewed and re-constituted as necessary to lead the implementation of the Major Events Strategy working through the Regional Tourism Forum and Regional Marketing Forum
- An implementation plan will be drawn up and included in the Action Plans of the Regional Economic Strategy
- A rolling calendar of major events will be developed and published

The region has much to be proud of in developing an enviable track record for securing and delivering high quality major events. We must now build on this, and the Northwest Development Agency and its partners will continue to work collaboratively in the implementation of this strategy.

The support from the Regional Major Events Steering Group in the compilation of this Strategy is gratefully acknowledged:

<b>James Berresford</b>	Head of Tourism, Northwest Development Agency
<b>Julia Fawcett</b>	Chief Executive, The Lowry
<b>Susan Hunt</b>	Director of Marketing Co-ordination Unit, Manchester City Council
<b>Peter Mearns</b>	Director of Marketing, Northwest Development Agency
<b>Sheldon Phillips</b>	Partnership Marketing Manager, Northwest Development Agency
<b>Libby Raper</b>	Executive Director, Culture Northwest
<b>Sue Woodward</b>	Director of Regional Affairs, Granada TV & Creative Director, Liverpool Culture Company



### Maritime

SeaBritain (Year of the Sea), Regionwide 2005  
Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, start and finish  
Liverpool 2005-6, 2007-8  
Tall Ships' Race, Liverpool July 2008

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