

How will New East Manchester ensure that the employment benefits arising from the regional casino have a positive impact on the hardest to reach sections of the potential labour market?

The employment and regeneration significance of the regional casino

The presence of a regional casino and associated leisure and entertainment facility in east Manchester will deliver a substantial number of jobs to one of the poorest areas in England. Manchester currently ranks as the third most deprived local authority in the country and east Manchester has twenty five of the hundred most deprived neighbourhoods in England, as defined by the Government's indices of multiple deprivation. Twenty percent of Manchester residents are currently in receipt of income support, twice the national average. Four percent of the city's working age residents are unemployed, compared to a national and regional average of 2.5%. Manchester continues to suffer from high levels of persistent worklessness, defined as those people who are registered unemployed as well as those who are economically inactive and claiming other benefits. There are 62,000 benefit claimants in the city, including some 37,000 residents claiming Incapacity Benefit.

Reducing worklessness is the single biggest challenge facing modern cities. Accessing sustainable employment is a critical factor in ensuring the well-being of the city's residents. There are clear links between worklessness, poor health, low educational attainment, neighbourhood depopulation and crime.

The scale of opportunity in the city is equally profound. Manchester is the strongest and fastest growing economy outside of London and is the primary economic centre for the north of England. Economic growth in Manchester benefits the entire northwest economy. To ensure that Manchester continues to build on its potential there is a continuing need to improve skills, to ensure that we are able to provide the volume and quality of labour that businesses are looking to sustain the environment for residential and business investment. Only in a city such as Manchester, with the wealth of existing organisational experience and capacity to assist large numbers of workless individuals from welfare to work, can the employment opportunities of a regional casino benefit large numbers of locally unemployed. This would not be the case in any other locations in the Northwest of England.

A regional casino in Manchester will not rely upon labour from outside of the city to fill vacancies but instead will benefit from a supply of trained, motivated and work-ready local residents, many of whom are already progressing through the support services offered through Jobcentre Plus, the City Council and New East Manchester. The regional casino will further enhance the capacity of such services, to the benefit of all workless residents including those who remain currently hardest to reach through mainstream services.

A regional casino development at Sportcity has far greater potential for employment provision and broader regeneration benefits than any other feasible use of this site, and the opportunities it presents remain urgently required.

Manchester City Council and New East Manchester have accrued significant experience and organisational capacity through major regeneration and social development programmes over the last two decades. Our experience, and lessons from other areas of the country, confirms that the economic goals of regeneration in Manchester can not be achieved without comprehensive intervention programmes, led by the public sector but in partnership with private enterprise, and always tailored to specific and often complex local needs.

It is therefore an over-simplification to assume that Manchester is mostly 'regenerated' or that the existing momentum of regeneration established in Manchester is yet sufficient to have established an adequate degree of regenerative self-sustainability. The economic and social benefits that arise from major new employment opportunities will not automatically benefit those sections of the community already most excluded from the mainstream services and programmes designed to support workless residents. Without programmes specifically tailored to assist the hardest to reach sections of the labour market, new employment opportunities may serve to further exasperate economic and social polarisation.

It is not possible to assist the hardest to reach without the pre-existence of successful support services for tiers of the workforce who are relatively less excluded from the labour market. This creates a path of progression, bridging the hardest to reach to a situation where, equipped with skills and experience that would otherwise be unobtainable, there exists a broad equality of opportunity in obtaining and retaining employment comparable to that of any other applicant. It creates a 'level playing field' and is a fundamental component of the area's regeneration objectives.

The regional casino will bring benefit to three levels of the East Manchester labour market.

One. At the widest level, the development will provide new employment chances and career progression opportunities to Manchester residents as a whole. Manchester City Council and New East Manchester will ensure that the development operator's commitment to staff training is such that many of those recruited can realistically expect to receive additional training in specialist skills associated with the regional casino (for example, in customer service and hospitality management) that will significantly enhance their long term employability. This upgrade in the skills base is likely to result in higher earnings and a more sustainable employment tenure, which will have its own regeneration benefits.

An example of New East Manchester's support for jobseekers is **Aspire**. It is a not-for-profit employment agency, devised and implemented by New East Manchester to provide employers with local labour to fill temporary recruitment needs. In return, participant employees are guaranteed the opportunity to retain their employment status. Participants remain in receipt of a stable income from the agency even when employment assignments are unavailable, in exchange for enrolment on training courses specifically suited to each individual's needs. It also facilitates movement of labour across employment sectors and encourages individuals to retrain or change career without the risks associated with formal unemployment. The project was created partly in recognition that individuals with a track record of sustained employment, albeit initially as temporary contracts, stand a much higher chance of securing eventual permanent employment.

In many cases participants are consequently offered permanent employment with the host employer. Over the last two years, Aspire has worked with over 100 employer organisations, providing staff with a wide range of disciplines across every skill sector and has created over 300 permanent jobs.

In 2004, Aspire won the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister employment award. The Aspire business model has since been replicated in several other urban regeneration companies across the country, and work is underway to introduce a nationwide

scheme for young people who wish to become apprentices, based on the Aspire model.

Two. The second category of workless residents to benefit from the employment opportunities presented by the regional casino will be those who are currently unemployed within Manchester and east Manchester. Many may possess some skills and may have only recently become unemployed, or may operate to some extent in an informal economy. This comprises of national schemes, such as those operated by 'Jobcentre Plus', training providers and childcare providers. New East Manchester has developed a range of initiatives to supplement these services. Many of these projects have been designated as 'national best practice' and awarded recognition by agencies such as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the European Union.

Highly successful New East Manchester initiatives at this level include:

The Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy Project is an initiative aimed at helping residents to manage income, debt and benefits. It is of particular use in facilitating a smoother 'transition' in the often disruptive and financially challenging time when employment income replaces benefit income at the start of a new job. It should also be noted that the proposed 'Responsible Gambling Unit' has identified the Financial Inclusion project as a key partner. In this context the project could be commissioned to deliver crucial advice and education information to new employees of the casino around income management, and to educate the wider community on topics relating to leisure budgeting.

The East Manchester Job Brokerage Project is a partnership scheme with the Jobcentre that seeks to provide a personalised level of support to Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) claimants. Currently, no mainstream support is offered to benefit claimants within the first six months of registration – the project aims to facilitate a faster transition back into work before an individual becomes classified as 'long term unemployed'. The programme identifies and offers training that assists in better preparing individuals for employment, and also offers support and advice related to CV writing, application form completion and interview preparation. Post-employment support is also offered to monitor the suitability of employment and to ensure that the transition to work is sustainable. Up to June 2006, 409 residents had signed up to participate in the service, with 165 gaining full time, permanent employment and 157 enrolled on training.

Three. It is only following the establishment of provision to cater for the two tiers mentioned above that meaningful support can be delivered to the 'hardest to reach' sections of the community.

'Hard to reach' clients can be defined as those individuals and groups within society which have particular problems or barriers to their engagement with mainstream agencies, and as a consequence are furthest from the labour market. Such individuals can have one or more of the following issues:

- Problems relating to literacy or numeracy
- Suffering from a long term and limiting illnesses

- A history of drug or alcohol abuse
- A family history of worklessness, often traceable across several generations
- May have a history of criminality which further compounds other barriers to employment
- May be recent former asylum seekers, and may have limited English language skills.
- A reluctance to engage with, and a mistrust of, public services and support agencies

Within east Manchester, the average individual categorised as 'hard to reach' has claimed benefits for in excess of nine years, often with little or no successful contact with support services aimed at other categories of workless residents.

It is only in east Manchester – a regeneration area of 60,000 people and where the full spectrum of support services is understood and adopted to suit local specific needs on such a large scale - that the presence of an employment opportunity on the scale of a regional casino can then be realistically expected to provide jobs to those who are initially hardest to reach. Although otherwise successful conventional support programmes do not reach those faced with the most obstacles in accessing employment, their existence – and scale of capacity - are essential prerequisites to achieving this task.

A wide range of initiatives to engage the hardest to reach in east Manchester are currently underway. Examples include the following:

The New East Manchester Intensive Support Project aims to provide long term and focussed support to local people who face the greatest challenges in securing and sustaining employment. Clients can expect practical and impartial support from their advisor. Another key element is a 24-hour hotline, as each advisor aims to provide a personalised support service as and when it is required. The project is a partnership between Manchester City Council, Jobcentre Plus, the Youth Offending Team, Greater Manchester Police and the Probation Service. It won the 2005 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister national neighbourhood award for employment, and since 2004 has helped 90 people into work and has directed over 120 into training opportunities.

Clients entering the project often have very chaotic lifestyles; there may have mental health issues requiring referral and treatment, there may be involvement in drug or alcohol misuse – again, requiring a structured and coordinated solution. Many may have criminal records. The project works closely with offenders who are due for release back into the area and with the Probation Service. In particular, the Intensive Support Project team have very close ties to prison outreach services to identify job and training opportunities. This work has been identified as being particularly successful at to reducing the probability of re-offending.

Childcare:

'Wonder of Work' is an east Manchester based project, currently in the process of being expanded across the city, aimed at encouraging parents of children under 5 and lone parents to become motivated and to start thinking about employment. Participants attend sessions lasting 16 hours per week, which involve building self esteem, and is often a first step along the path to employment.

Literacy and Numeracy:

The East Manchester Home Tuition Project provides basic skills training to residents in their own home, and has assisted over 150 people to date. It has also recruited over 120 local residents to train as home tutors, often working on a one-to-one basis with residents in their own homes. The project seeks to facilitate both formal and informal learning away from a classroom setting, which is often identified as an intimidating environment for the hardest to reach sections of the community.

Language and culture:

Ethnic Minority Outreach Workers

These support staff facilitate drop-in sessions, interpretation services and multi-agency coordination. Each worker devises an intensive support programme for clients, suffering from many of the most complex issues and barriers to work. This support is provided with an emphasis on sustainability of service, with an understanding that the benefits from such a scheme can only be realised beyond the short-term. Given the mistrust held by many ethnic minority individuals on the scheme – many who are former asylum seekers – of mainstream provision, their role as an advocate of mainstream employment support is essential. The trust developed with clients is often the first step along the path to employment.

Track record and expectations from the operator

New East Manchester and Manchester City Council undertook an initial exercise to select a casino operator and development consortium in 2003. (In line with Government guidance, this process will be entirely re-started should the licence be awarded to Manchester.) The selection procedure has given the Council experience and confidence in both defining the benefits it would seek to extract from the presence of a casino from the operator, and in defining the additional social responsibility requirements it would seek to impose as minimum standards upon the casino operator. It has market-tested the location of the casino in east Manchester, and has shown that levels of operator interest are sufficiently strong to realistically sustain the intensive support initiatives required to support the hardest to reach individuals in Manchester's labour market.

We will expect the casino operator to be genuinely committed to sharing the same employment and regeneration goals, and to work closely with local employment initiatives to support individuals at all levels in their progression to work. Commitments will also be secured to monitor the effectiveness of this work. Previous initiatives with companies in the area have tested and proven this approach. We will also expect the operator to develop and part-fund a national Training Centre of Excellence, which will work closely with all levels of employment support in the city.

A tested template has already been developed to achieve this. The Asda Walmart development, adjacent to the Sportcity site, created over 900 full time equivalent jobs when it opened, many of which were accessible to local people through a project developed and lead by New East Manchester.

The Asda Walmart Employment support programme: During the recruitment stage, following an extensive information campaign, over 8000 enquiries were processed by the NEM team from residents wishing to take part in the recruitment programme on offer for the new Asda store. The programme offered a guaranteed job interview to any resident who successfully completed the free training programme on offer. This directly resulted in the recruitment of over 550 staff, and over 250 of these were local residents. Once the store opened, Asda recruited a further 84 east

Manchester staff through the project. Subsequent evaluation – again a result of careful project planning between NEM and Asda - revealed that 90% of the employment intake lives within a 15 minute journey time from the store. The success of this project resulted in a request by English Partnerships to publish a step-by-step best practice guide to the project. NEM is confident that many local residents will directly benefit from a similar project if a regional casino is opened at Sportcity.

It must be stressed that the examples of employment initiatives listed here are only samples of the wide range of programmes currently operating in Manchester. We have sought to show that essential to Manchester's regeneration is a strong understanding of how to access the hardest to reach sections of society, a process that requires robust support for individuals at all stages in the city's labour market to create a path of progression to sustainable employment. It is only through the use of innovative and locally tailored initiatives, and through the selection of an operator fully committed to achieving the same goals, that the significant regeneration potential of the regional casino can be fully realised for local residents most in need of employment opportunities.

New East Manchester, September 2006