



## Japan Local Government Centre, London

### Monthly Report for January 2011 – Destination Promotion in the UK 1

The strain on public finances in the UK has seen a decision to merge London's three promotion agencies into one new body from April 2011, it was announced by the Mayor of London Boris Johnson last month. The capital's tourism promotion agency Visit London, inward investment body Think London and academic marketing board Study London will come together to form a new arms-length agency, provisionally titled 'Promote London', from April.

Following the Government decision to abolish the Regional Development Agencies the future of both the London Development Agency and the bodies it funds was in some doubt. It was originally thought that London's development agency would be spared the fate of the eight outside of the capital, but ministers confirmed plans to proceed with its abolition and fold its activities into the Greater London Authority.

In November business leaders in the capital took the step of writing to the Business Secretary Vince Cable to plead for the funding of a promotion body to attract investment to the capital, warning that London would suffer globally if it did not retain such capacity. The letter was followed by high level lobbying by the Mayor's office to argue for this funding to undertake such work in future. However, the new combined body will operate with a budget of only £14m a year, compared to the current £12m for just Visit London, though this excludes any private sector funding for marketing campaigns. The new body will work closely with both Visit Britain and UK Trade and Investment.

Promote London will be chaired by Dame Judith Mayhew-Jonas, currently Chairman of the New West End Company Business Improvement District and a Vice President of London First, having previously led the City of London Corporation for six years and served as Deputy Chairman of the London Development Agency and Chairman of the Royal Opera House. It will be run by an interim chief executive Danny Lopez, currently a director at the LDA and formerly marketing director of UK Trade and Investment and Head of Inward Investment in London for Barclays Bank.

In June 2009 the Mayor set up the Promote London Council, based at City Hall, as part of his Economic Development Strategy. The role of the council is "*advising the Mayor on developing a comprehensive approach to promoting the capital and establishing a publicly engaging brand for London*", before, during and after the 2012 Olympic Games, and it consists of 20 representatives of business, academia and London government. The Mayor has been roundly criticised by business leaders in the capital however for closing the city's trade missions in China and India since his election in 2008, having promised to do so as part of his manifesto.

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The attempts towards saving costs through consolidation of external promotion agencies in London are being mirrored elsewhere in the UK. In November last year, Edinburgh City Council approved the creation from April 2011 of a unified 'Marketing Edinburgh' body to consolidate the existing public-private partnerships in the Scottish capital of the Destination Edinburgh Marketing Alliance, Edinburgh Convention Bureau and Edinburgh Film Focus. In November it was also announced that the city of Sheffield would bring together its development company Creativesheffield and Yorkshire South Tourism as one new entity, 'Marketing Sheffield', from April 2011.

In December, Leeds City Council announced the merger of Financial Leeds, Marketing Leeds and Conference Leeds and its own Visit Leeds and Locate in Leeds teams as one new public-private partnership for tourism and investment promotion following the abolition of the region's development agency Yorkshire Forward.

The same month however, Liverpool City Council announced its intention to bring the currently independent Liverpool Vision city development company in-house to the council, becoming a team within its regeneration directorate, while the council's Culture Liverpool team will merge with it. While the new team will make some staff redundant as it copes with a reduced size, it has announced the opening of an 'embassy' for the city in London, though this will be funded by local companies rather than the council, who will operate it on a trial basis for three months from January. The move follows the city's successful pavilion at the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, the only UK city with a dedicated presence at the event, which in contrast to London has also led to the opening of a representative office in the Chinese city.

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