

## **Destination Advisory Board (DAB)**

10 December 2024

### **Attendance**

1. Chris Hayward - Policy Chairman, City of London Corporation [*Chair*]
2. Andrew Jackson CBE - Tower Director, Historic Royal Palaces [*Cultural Institution Appointment*]
3. Charlotte Fletcher - Chair, Cheapside Business Alliance [*BID Appointment*]
4. Tony Matharu - Founder and Chairman, Central London Alliance CIC/Blue Orchid Hospitality
5. Sean Ghouse - Director of Retail UK, Fortnum & Mason
6. Andrew Hilston - Managing Director, The Ardent Companies
7. Shravan Joshi – Planning & Transportation Committee Representative, City of London Corporation
8. John Griffiths – Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee Representative, City of London Corporation
9. James Thomson – Policy & Resources Representative, City of London Corporation
10. Helen Fentiman – Community & Children’s Service Committee Representative, City of London Corporation
11. Ian Thomas - Town Clerk & Chief Executive, City of London Corporation
12. Jen Beckermann – Destination City SRO and Executive Director & Private Secretary to the Policy Chairman, City of London Corporation
13. Ben Dixon – Head of the Policy Unit, Office of the Policy Chairman
14. Emily Slatter – Policy Unit, Office of the Policy Chairman
15. Omkar Chana - Operations & Project Director
16. Emma Markiewicz – Director of The London Archives & Culture SRO

### **Apologies:**

1. Paul Martin - Independent consultant for the Independent Review 2024
2. Simon McCaugherty - Director of Destination, London & Partners [*London & Partners Appointment*]

## **A public summary of the Destination Advisory Board held on 10 December 2024**

The Board held its inaugural meeting in December 2024. The Policy Chairman welcomed members of the Board and outlined its terms of reference. He emphasized the importance of bringing together diverse views from the private sector, our BIDs and other external members, as well as a broad representation from across City of London Committee Chairs.

The Board heard a presentation from the Destination City Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), outlining the updated scope, cadence, and operational arrangements of the new Destination City (DC) programme.

- The presentation included a baseline of data for the City of London, detailing current trends in footfall and spending patterns. This data was used to frame the programme's alignment with the workstreams proposed in the 2024 Martin Review of Destination City.
- The baseline figures were recognised as providing a strong foundation for understanding trends and informing strategic decisions. There was support for the reframing of the programme as the growth strategy for the Square Mile.

The discussion following the presentation emphasised the importance of defining what "*growth*" could mean for the City, with considerations extending beyond quantitative metrics to include qualitative metrics. There was consensus that the Martin Review recommendations - including interventions such as placemaking, improved connectivity between places and curating a vibrant business offer - were critical enabling components of enabling future growth.

The core workstreams outlined in the Martin Review were a central focus of discussion. On *improving pedestrian connectivity* the Board considered the challenges of wayfinding and the potential to better define and promote distinct districts within the Square Mile. It was agreed that there is value in supporting connectivity between areas with high pull-factor such as 22 Bishopsgate. While some suggested that the charm of the City lay in its complex layout, there was agreement that more intuitive wayfinding solutions could enhance visitor experience and increase dwell-time.

*Developing a consistently lively and animated ground floor experience* was also discussed. The Board considered several measures to stimulate a lively ground-floor experience. Discussion also centred on support for ground floor businesses. This included measures articulated in the SME Strategy and Draft City Plan 2040. Public realm investments and improved landscaping were also seen as essential for creating welcoming and vibrant spaces. Here, the value of public realm improvements were highlighted as critical.

Building on baseline footfall data presented by the DC SRO, the Board also discussed the goal of *driving footfall*. It was noted that the City's busiest days are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Mondays and Fridays wane by comparison, and the City sees 2.4 times more footfall on weekdays than weekends. The Board reflected on the different audience for weekdays versus weekends and

acknowledged that specific and targeted interventions would be needed to reach these different audiences. There was consensus that the DC programme should target its KPIs on specific week days (namely, Monday and Friday), gradually expand efforts on increasing weekend footfall.

Underpinning the discussion was an acknowledgement on positioning the City as a destination. Concerns were raised about whether branding concepts such as "Old Town" adequately conveyed the vibrancy and modernity of the City. There was agreement that the City's blend of historic and contemporary elements could be a powerful differentiator. Here, the importance of a cohesive branding strategy as identified by the Martin Review, supported by partners representing the City, was noted as critical to the success of the programme. The Board encouraged the City to develop more structure around its seasonal planning and emphasised the need to focus on a small number of high-impact initiatives, building upon them to achieve meaningful progress.

The issue of data emerged as a recurring theme. Board members acknowledged gaps in data analysis and called for a more focused approach to identifying the insights most critical to decision-making. There was recognition that while the City is not short of data sources, prioritising actionable metrics would be key to advancing the DC programme's objectives.