

The MILLENNIUM BUG

Locum Destination Consulting has advised Millennium Projects on issues as wide-ranging as creative strategy, visitor forecasting and business planning. Locum's Managing Director, **James Alexander**, reflects on the contribution made by the Millennium Commission to the UK's destination market, and considers just how deep its long-term impact may be.

At Locum we have been fortunate enough to work on some of the outstanding Millennium Landmark Projects: At-Bristol, Odyssey, Glasgow Science Centre, National Space Science Centre at Leicester, Millennium Point at Birmingham, Portsmouth Harbour and the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Project. Now, as the majority of Millennium Commission-funded projects are opening or near completion, and the team at Stag Place begins to shed staff, it is an opportune moment to look across the spectrum of activity and take stock of five years' investment of Millennium-focused Lottery funding. Since its establishment in 1995, the Millennium Commission has rarely been out of the media glare. It has enjoyed some outstanding headline successes – Eden, the British Museum Great Court and the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, to name but three – and some significant failures, including the National Pop Music Centre, the Faith Centre in Bradford and the Dome. But there has also been a whole raft of much smaller projects and initiatives that simply go by uncharted, including the creation and renovation of hundreds of village halls, churches



Will the next few years see more Millennium Projects go the same way as Sheffield's National Centre for Pop Music?

and community woodlands. The breakdown of total Millennium Commission funding shows an admirable attempt not only to distribute project funds proportionately by region but also by scale:

Table 1: Funding of Millennium Projects by region

Region	Total funds awarded £	Millennium Projects		Average award	Biggest award	Project receiving biggest award
		Projects	Sites	£	£	
Scotland	192,949,129	19	486	10,155,217	35,000,000	Glasgow Science Centre
Northern Ireland	78,383,681	17	124	4,610,805	45,000,000	Odyssey
Wales	129,148,952	9	56	14,349,884	46,000,000	Millennium Stadium
North East	65,213,228	9	91	7,245,914	31,450,000	International Centre for Life
North West	93,368,623	19	102	4,914,138	15,650,000	The Lowry Centre
Yorkshire and Humberside	156,638,324	17	396	9,214,019	40,000,000	The Earth Centre
East Midlands	46,619,641	11	22	4,238,149	26,000,000	National Space Science Centre
West Midlands	84,402,638	11	1,010	7,672,967	50,000,000	Millennium Point
East of England	59,786,105	18	18	3,321,450	30,069,000	Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Project
South West	108,509,097	8	59	13,563,637	44,300,000	At-Bristol
South East	95,402,229	25	42	3,321,450	38,000,000	Portsmouth Harbour
Greater London	147,930,099	15	50	9,862,007	50,000,000	Tate Modern
Cross regional	17,753,000	2	2	8,876,500	14,851,000	Huddersfield Narrow Canal
England-wide	20,100,000	2	412	10,050,000	10,100,000	Millennium Greens
England and Scotland	2,500,000	1	100	2,500,000	2,500,000	Rural Churches in Community Service
England and Wales	28,737,000	2	221	14,368,500	22,100,000	Changing Places
Great Britain and UK-wide	56,753,053	5	552	11,350,611	43,500,000	Sustrans
TOTAL	1,387,194,799	190	3,743	7,301,025		

Source: Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000

Table 2: Key Millennium funding statistics

	Total funds awarded £	Average award £	Biggest award £	Recipient/s of biggest award
Millennium Project Awards	1,387,194,799	7,301,025	50,000,000	Tate Modern (London); Millennium Point (Birmingham)
Millennium People Awards	99,211,657	2,870	2,794,120	Pre-School Learning Alliance (covering 1,022 Awards)
Millennium Festival Awards	26,005,967	13,884	645,000	Cardiff Millennium Festival
Millennium Experience	628,000,000	-	-	New Millennium Experience Company
TOTAL	2,124,412,423			

Source: Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000

Millennium Commission funding for capital projects has massively outweighed funds for Millennium Awards, Festivals and even the ill-fated Millennium Experience at the Dome. A total of almost £1.4 billion has gone to Millennium Projects, the two biggest grants being made to Tate Modern and Millennium Point, each receiving £50 million:

By supporting this range of capital projects, the Millennium Commission has been largely responsible for the unprecedented expansion of the destination market. But what sort of a future awaits the destination projects that have taken shape thanks to the Millennium Commission's financial intervention?

Long-term success, as in all sectors of commerce, will be measured by staying power. Each of these new destinations requires a strong vision and mission to drive its development team, and then sufficient momentum to keep it moving forward. Can this strength be breathed into a new organisation through gifts of funding? Or does it need to be inspired from within? The V&A is a high-profile institution not only because of its wonderful collection but also because, since 1851, it has been a benchmark for others. Will the same be said of the Leicester Space Science Centre in 2150? Somehow I doubt it. And what about Sustrans, the National Cycle Network? We'll see.

Managing for the future

It would not be entirely surprising if, in line with employment trends in other sectors, most project leaders do not stay on far beyond the grand openings of their destinations. Once the first generation of leadership has gone, will the same care, attention and emotional capital invested in the gestation and birth of these projects be matched on an ongoing basis by the succeeding management teams? To boot, we should not forget it has been shown that, over a 50-year period, the initial capital costs of a project often account for less than 5% of the total investment. Considering that significant numbers of Millennium Projects have required capital set-up funding of close to £100

million, this suggests an intimidating level of future expenditure. How many can claim to have business plans ready to cope with the level of reinvestment that their long-term survival statistically demands? These are all very real challenges for the 'millennium destinations', and the Millennium Commission will not be around beyond 2005 to pick up the pieces if things go wrong.

Of course, text book management says that the only way to secure long-term success is constant change and reinvestment based on evaluation and monitoring. And this is what the Millennium Commission cannot deliver from beyond the grave. So who is planning for the future? On whose shoulders does the responsibility to deliver a legacy rest? Most likely it will be left with the directors and operational managers of the projects themselves. But building a legacy is not high on the agenda for them: they are busy trying to secure day-to-day survival in the gritty, competitive world of leisure, tourism, culture and heritage.

This means that strategic decision-making is likely to focus on short-term rather than long-term goals. In this sense, millennium management teams are likely to fall into the trap common to central government and long-term PFI projects: 'Let's take the benefits now and leave someone else to deal with the potential problems downstream!' And when the first generation of project directors are far removed from the action, enjoying a comfortable retirement in sunnier climes, their successors will be left dealing with the fallout.

It is possible that there will be no long-term accountability for the initial management of some of these new destinations, and this is a significant failing - one which I suspect hasn't really been thought through. This is a weakness inherent in any public programme of investment which does not rest on a central culture of pastoral care. In France, the Grands Projets succeed because a central plank of any government's policy is rooted in delivery of long-term public benefit and a drive to deliver more lasting rewards than their predecessors. They mean it, we give lip service.



The Natural History Museum: successful thanks to years of emotional and financial investment.

Will the story be similar for Landmark Millennium Projects such as the National Botanic Garden of Wales (below)?





Although it is early days and the visitors are flocking in, Millennium Projects must plan ahead now for long-term survival

Table 3: Distribution of Millennium People Awards funding and Millennium Festivals funding

Region	Millennium People Awards		Millennium Festival Awards	
	Schemes	Winners	Large Festivals over £5,000	Small Festivals under £5,000
Scotland	36	1,207	62	201
Northern Ireland	31	860	30	123
Wales	37	744	26	174
North East	37	703	16	61
North West	40	1,171	29	117
Yorkshire and Humberside	41	1,016	31	93
East Midlands	40	695	24	89
West Midlands	39	1,233	23	117
East of England	37	920	18	111
South West	38	1,348	30	112
South East	40	1,332	33	158
Greater London	41	1,446	39	136
Cross regional	-	-	33	-
England-wide	35	9,591	-	-
England and Scotland	-	-	-	-
England and Wales	-	-	-	-
UK-wide	25	12,291	-	-
TOTAL	517	34,557	378	1,495

Source: Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000

The Millennium Commission legacy

Given that the Millennium Commission has got us to where we are now (and the improvement on five years ago is significant by any measure), we should spend some time celebrating its achievements: 190 capital projects nationwide, with a capital value in excess of £1.3 billion, over 34,500 individual awards worth a combined total of almost £100 million, 320 village halls created or renovated, etc, etc. The statistics go on. But more importantly, there has been a change in the landscape, both literally and metaphorically: iconic statements for the millennium, finally demonstrating that the UK can create world-class destinations in the style of our European counterparts. These destinations should be capable of fuelling the continued growth in in-bound tourism to the UK. There are many innovative, thoughtful projects that demand attention globally and act as a shop window for the sector.

At the other end of the spectrum, it can be argued that, at a grass roots level, the Millennium Commission has made a very individual and

personal impact, the legacy of which may well be life-changing. For every Odyssey Landmark, thousands of Millennium Awards have been made to individuals, ranging from youngsters venturing off on Operation Raleigh expeditions to house-seekers in deprived inner-city areas. What better way to invest money is there when viewed at this level?

Nonetheless, cynical as it may sound, life-changing events and endeavours funded by Lottery money do not trigger inward investment, regeneration and job creation. Hence the Millennium Commission's approach to fund distribution has favoured the big projects that it believed had the best chance of delivering these economic benefits. They set out to achieve a balance, UK-wide, of investment that allows the Cornish countryside to benefit just as much as London and the other cities. Substantial regeneration of urban and brown-field sites has levered millions of pounds of further public, European and private sector capital. Ultimately, the sum total of the Millennium Commission's work will be responsible for significant job creation, as yet not fully developed or measured, and an economic multiplier with a capability to really make a difference.