

Voluntary Code of Practice for the Visitor Industry

Options for reducing nuisance from touting and improving the quality of the city centre experience

Executive Summary

The City Council is firmly committed to improving the quality of the city centre experience for residents and visitors. This includes the reduction of nuisance related to the activities of city centre business as they seek to attract customers. The quality of the city centre experience matters to business and businesses can suffer if potential customers feel uncomfortable, harassed or even unsafe in our city. We want your views on what is being proposed.

This consultation paper outlines the elements of a Voluntary Code of Practice, directed at members of the visitor/tourism industry, outlining practical and strategic measures that can and should be taken to reduce nuisance from commercial touting in the city centre. These elements have been formulated through a preliminary consultation process involving punting and sightseeing tour operators, the local authorities, the police, public and private agencies and private individuals. They do not reflect council policy. This consultation is intended to seek comments on a Voluntary Code of Practice and inform decision-makers. *The consultation also seeks your opinion on the option to extend the code of practice to cover standards and quality issues as outlined in section 2 below*

If this Code of Practice does not achieve its aim of reducing nuisance in the city centre by voluntary means, the Council is resolved to look at other options, including legal action and the proposed byelaw.

Why is the Voluntary Code of Practice being proposed?

The aim of the Code is to reduce nuisance from commercial touting in the city centre. This Voluntary Code of Practice outlines recommendations for actions to be taken by all businesses that sell their services or products to residents of and visitors to Cambridge City Centre. It includes punting operations, guided tour operators, and licensed street traders as well as those city centre companies for whom it is a secondary function of their business.

Whilst, the Code is written for visitor industry operators, it must also impact upon statutory bodies, in order for it to be effective. The responsibilities outlined in the proposed Voluntary Code of Practice will affect a large number of sectors and groups, including;

- visitor industry operators;
- individual citizens;
- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council;
- City Centre Management;

- the Police; and
- central government

What are the benefits to the visitor industry?

The quality of public space matters to business. If it is clean, safe and welcoming it not only encourages **visitors to linger longer** but to make and encourages others to **make return trips**. It therefore goes without saying that anything that causes people to feel uncomfortable will damage that 'dwell time' and repeat visits reducing the potential for business.

There are undoubted **operational benefits** to punting companies in redeploying staff into other areas if the number of touts allowed is restricted as proposed in this Code, areas that may improve pre-booking, punt station sales or service quality.

The **public relations opportunity** for the city to exploit represented in the Voluntary Code of Practice and associated improvement to the public experience should not be underestimated.

Demonstrating good practice. This Code of Practice provides the ideal opportunity to demonstrate your respect for the area in which you work

Definitions

Touts

This refers to any individual operating outside their business premises seeking to solicit customers or patronage, especially in a brazen way. In this document the term touts also includes chauffeurs acting in a touting capacity but does not include chauffeurs merely acting as chauffeurs.

Punt Operators

This is a general term that not only includes the established formal businesses that have stations along the river but also covers independent collectives of two or more punts or individuals with a single punt. That said the Voluntary Code of Practice does seek to separately address the issues associated with formal businesses and informal independents.

Punt stations

Does include the platforms, slipways and pontoons along the river but does not include informal mooring points or unauthorised use of public and private land for hiring punts.

Introduction

This consultation paper outlines the elements of a Voluntary Code of Practice, directed at members of the visitor industry, outlining practical and strategic measures that can and should be taken to reduce the nuisance caused by touting in the city centre. It is important to give your views on what is proposed. This paper aids part of Council strategy (through the Tourism Strategy and City Centre Management Business Plan) for maximising the benefits of tourism to the city while managing its impact on quality of life.

Direct statutory responsibilities for elements of the touting issue lie with a number of different public and private bodies. Local authorities have responsibilities for maintaining the quality of public spaces, as do owners of private properties bordering onto public land such as shop frontages and garage forecourts.

This Code of Practice is a voluntary agreement. There are no statutory or legal obligations attached to the requirements stated in the Code of Practice, at this stage. A number of elements in the Code recommend examples of best practice to enable operators to achieve certain minimum requirements. For example, improving customer services through Welcome Host training supported by VisitCambridge and the East of England Tourist Board.

The recommendations contained within the Code of Practice are based closely on discussions and consultation with operators, local authorities, and other stakeholders. They are designed to reflect the abilities and limitations of individual operators, and to build on existing good practice in the industry. They will continue to be assessed to ensure their effectiveness and to avoid unreasonable resource burdens on businesses, public bodies and local authorities.

Supporting the Code of Practice

Operators are encouraged to consider ways in which they can integrate recommendations from this proposed Code of Practice into their business practices, guidelines and staff training.

Local authorities, City Centre Management, the Police, other land managers and stakeholders are encouraged to take the requirements of the Code of Practice and implement them where possible.

The success of the proposed Code of Practice is dependent on support from other agencies and in all cases it is the spirit as well as the letter of the Voluntary Code of Practice that should be adopted.

Code of Practice (Punt Operators)

I/We agree to ensure that:

- A None of our staff approach a prospective customer when:**
- 1 they have just rejected a previous approach from another tout**
- For the public one of the most unwelcome issues related to punting is being approached by tout after tout over a short distance
 - It is this activity that can lead to people 'feeling' harassed even if each individual tout is not acting in a harassing manner
 - In most instances it will be clear to a tout that a member of the public has already been approached and where this is the case they should not then approach. If the member of the public is interested in finding out more information they should be left to make the next move and approach your staff if they wish.
- 2 they are in discussions with another tout**
- The term aggressive touting when analysed usually relates to incidents between touts involving a member of the public
 - Touts should not step in front of another tout in an attempt to hijack a prospective customer
 - Touts should not hover near other touts while they are in discussion with a prospective customer effectively interfering with that touts business
- 3 they are undertaking business with other city centre traders**
- This means not approaching customers when they are queuing for ice creams, waiting to enter restaurants, 'window shopping' or similarly interacting with other city centre businesses.
- B None of our staff will stand in the path of prospective customers**
- The underlying objective of this Code is to ensure residents and visitors feel comfortable walking through the city centre. It is important that they should feel unable or restricted from passing a tout and should certainly not feel the need to step around a tout, potentially into the carriageway for example.
- C Our staff avoid making reference to other competing operators**
- This is intended to stop unnecessary and unprofessional derogatory remarks about competing operations that create a negative impression of Cambridge.
- D None of our staff shout or hawk for business**
- E Our staff take no for a answer**
- This is an easy statement make but requires staff to take an open and empathetic approach to dealing with customers, picking up on clear rejections signals
- F Our staff will act in a courteous and customer focuses manner**
- 1 We will endeavour to ensure all frontline staff have undertaken Welcome Host or similar visitor industry standard training in customer service**

- G We maintain a register of all our staffs contact details to be used in the event of complaints**
- 1 Should a complaint be registered by a member of the public, the police or other public body, that complaint will be logged against the named staff member
- 2 We will operate a '3 strikes and you are out' policy. More than 3 complaints in a rolling month and a staff member is 'sin binned'. More than 2 'sin bins' a season and staff member must be either redeployed from front line customer duties and undertake a complaints interview or be asked to leave the business, at our discretion
- G Our staff wear smart and consistent uniform of our design and choosing**
- 1 All staff must also wear a clear badge with their name and that of the punting company to enable customers to identify them
- H We will only operate from a punt station or stations**
- Using the general definition of a punt station given above all participants in this Voluntary Code of Practice will operate from a station and not from any available mooring point they ay find convenient or lucrative. It is proposed that where necessary action will be taken by riparian owners to prevent all commercial punting activity not taking place from legitimate stations
- I We restrict the number of touts per punt station**
- 1 **Option 1: to 4 staff members with no more than 2 within 15 metres of each other in any direction**
- 2 **Option 2: to x for every y boats operating from a station**
- It is felt that this is probably an unworkable option due to the wide variations in boat numbers per operator and the difficulty of boats moving between stations. It was however discussed in previous consultations and we welcome feedback or suggestions on how/whether it might work
- J All our activities are covered by public liability insurance**
- This is a requirement of the Cam Conservancy that this Code of Practice seeks to reinforce. The level and extent of public liability insurance should be a matter for individual operators to determine but should at the very least match the minimum level that from time to time exists within the public entertainments and attractions industry
- K All sales or pre-sales activity by touts or staff directly with potential customers will:**
- 1 **Option 1: be confined to an area immediately adjacent to our punt stations**
- In practice this should mean staff not touting more than 10 metres from your mooring station and in all events not on the public highway or land otherwise restricted by ownership or law
- This option is not intended to restrict other sales and marketing opportunities such as a ticket sales deals with retail outlets, hotels or even the potential for

kiosks but does not specifically approve them either. It is certainly intended to confine traditional face to face touting to within 10 metres of stations

- 2 **Option2: not take place in the specific areas marked or cross-hatched red in the Map attached to this Code**

In practice this option is intended to achieve the same aim of confining activity to areas immediately adjacent to mooring points where is not on the public highway or land otherwise restricted by ownership or law

- L **To abide by the Byelaws of the River Cam and River Cam Conservancy Act, 1922 (as amended) and regulations made by the Conservators under Section 25.**

Signed
(on behalf of operator)

Date

Signed
(on behalf of local authority)

Date

Code of Practice (Other City Centre Businesses)

I/We agree to ensure that:

- A None of our staff approach a prospective customer when:**
- 1 they have just rejected a previous approach from another tout**
- For the public one of the most unwelcome issues related to punting is being approached by tout after tout over a short distance
 - It is this activity that can lead to people 'feeling' harassed even if each individual tout is not acting in a harassing manner
 - In most instances it will be clear to a tout that a member of the public has already been approached and where this is the case they should not then approach. If the member of the public is interested in finding out more information they should be left to make the next move and approach your staff if they wish.
- 2 they are in discussions with another tout**
- The term aggressive touting when analysed usually relates to incidents between touts involving a member of the public
 - Touts should not step in front of another tout in an attempt to hijack a prospective customer
 - Touts should not hover near other touts while they are in discussion with a prospective customer effectively interfering with that touts business
- 3 they are undertaking business with other city centre traders**
- This means not approaching customers when they are queuing for ice creams, waiting to enter restaurants, 'window shopping' or similarly interacting with other city centre businesses.
- B None of our staff will stand in the path of prospective customers**
- The underlying objective of this Code is to ensure residents and visitors feel comfortable walking through the city centre. It is important that they should feel unable or restricted from passing a tout and should certainly not feel the need to step around a tout, potentially into the carriageway for example.
- C Our staff avoid making reference to other competing operators**
- D None of our staff shout or hawk for business**
- E Our staff take no for a answer**
- This is an easy statement make but requires staff to take an open and empathetic approach to dealing with customers, picking up on clear rejections signals
- F Our staff will act in a courteous and customer focuses manner**
- 1 We will endeavour to ensure all frontline staff have undertaken Welcome Host or similar visitor industry standard training in customer service**

- G We maintain a register of all our staffs contact details to be used in the event of complaints**
- 1 Should a complaint be registered by a member of the public, the police or other public body, that complaint will be logged against the named staff member
- 2 We will operate a '3 strikes and you are out' policy. More than 3 complaints in a rolling month and a staff member is 'sin binned'. More than 2 'sin bins' a season and staff member must be either redeployed from front line customer duties and undertake a complaints interview or be asked to leave the business, at our discretion
- H Our staff wear smart and consistent uniform of our design and choosing**
- 1 All staff must also wear a clear badge with their name and that of their company to enable customers to identify them
- I We will only operate from our business premises or location**
- For city centre business other than punting operators which are covered above, it is intended that staff should remain in business premises, in the case of licensed street trading pitches immediately adjacent to them and in the case of mobile operations such as buses, on or immediately adjacent (no more than 2metres way) to the operation.
- J We restrict the number of touts to 2 per business location**
- K All our activities are covered by public liability insurance**
- This is a requirement of the Cam Conservancy that this Code of Practice seeks to reinforce. The level and extent of public liability insurance should be a matter for individual operators to determine but should at the very least match the minimum level that from time to time exists within the public entertainments and attractions industry
- L All sales or pre-sales activity by staff directly with potential customers will:**
- 1 **Option 1:** be confined to an area immediately adjacent to where our punts are moored
- In practice this should mean staff not touting more than 10 metres from your mooring station and in all events not on the public highway or land otherwise restricted by ownership or law
- This option is not intended to restrict offer sales and marketing opportunities such as a ticket sales deals with retail outlets, hotels or even the potential for kiosks but does not specifically approve them either. It is certainly intended to confine traditional face to face touting to with 10 metres of stations
- 2 **Option2:** not take place in the specific areas marked or cross-hatched red in the Map attached to this Code
- In practice this option is intended to achieve the same aim of confining activity to areas immediately adjacent to mooring points where is not on the public highway or land otherwise restricted by ownership or law

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