

Department for Transport

**Home Zones Challenge Programme
Consultants (PPAD 9/99/49)**

Progress Report - August 2002

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Department for Transport
Home Zones Challenge Programme Consultants
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Babbie (Ross Silcock) were appointed on 05 February 2002 to act as Programme Management Consultants on the Home Zone Challenge being undertaken by the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 1.1.2 This report provides a summary of the work undertaken during the quarter ending 31st August 2002 in providing those services.
- 1.1.3 Following this introduction there is a review of the main activities during the period under each of the headings identified in the Inception Report. This is then followed by a review of the progress achieved by the local authorities participating in the scheme and the report concludes with a section identifying the issues raised this quarter and main activities for the coming quarter.

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2 PROGRESS AGAINST CONTRACT

2.1 Meetings

2.1.1 The second progress meeting was held in the Manchester office of Babbie Group on 27th August 2002. The Client Project Officer, Consultant Project Manager and Deputy attended this meeting which has been reported separately (the minutes are waiting to be agreed by the Client).

2.2 Establish Local Authority Contacts

2.2.1 The Babbie team of regional contacts has maintained regular contact with their assigned authorities during this quarter.

2.2.2 From a review of the quarterly proformas submitted in June, a number of authorities were identified for a visit due to either a requirement for more information to be provided on the proformas or an early construction start date. The following authorities have been visited to date :

- Devon CC;
- Bath & North East Somerset DC;
- Warrington BC;
- Trafford MBC;
- Rochdale MBC;
- St Helens MBC;
- Telford & Wrekin DC;
- Kirklees MBC;
- London Borough of Kingston upon Thames;
- London Borough of Bromley;
- Peterborough CC;
- Reading BC;
- Birmingham CC; and
- Lancashire CC.

2.2.3 Visits are also scheduled to Derby CC, Nottingham CC, Kent CC and LB of Greenwich. Following the submission of quarterly returns in June, the forms were simplified. These visits also allowed the forms to be explained in detail to the Authorities.

2.2.4 The financial aspects of these returns will be dealt with in a separate report submitted electronically to DfT. The progress reports from authorities have improved following the simplification of the form and the visits. However they remain variable in terms of the detail submitted and planned progress anticipated. A summary of all information received to date is attached on the accompanying Excel file ref: quarterly report 2.xls.

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2.3 Website Set-up

2.3.1 The project website has now been fully established and is being accessed by approximately 250 –300 users per week. Its' structure has recently been simplified and overhauled.

2.4 Website Maintenance

2.4.1 This is ongoing throughout the project and so far is not causing any difficulty. Minor problems identified to date have been attended to in a timely manner and the website continues to develop.

2.4.2 Now that progress on the Home Zones is being made, the website has been updated with the following news and information over the last quarter:

- photos of the Plymouth Home Zone Opening;
- photos of the Cornwall Fun Day;
- photos of the St Helens Fun Day;
- photos of and leaflets for the Exeter Fun Day
- Newspaper articles relating to the two zones planned by Bath & North East Somerset;
- Photos of the mock-up of Northmoor Phase 2; and
- the first two Progress Reports.

2.5 Internal Reporting

2.5.1 This is the eighth 'report' so far produced. Reports in this sense also include the minutes of all meetings. With the exception of the Inception Report, all these have been submitted in electronic format and include:

Inception Report	submitted	25 March 2002
Minutes of Inception Meeting	submitted	01 March 2002
Minutes of Inaugural Meeting	submitted	14 June 2002
Minutes of First Progress Meeting	submitted	24 May 2002
Financial Analysis May 2002	submitted	11 June 2002
Minutes of Second Progress Meeting	submitted	06 Sept 2002
Financial Analysis August 2002	submitted	09 Sept 2002

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2.6 Conferences

2.6.1 Project conferences have provisionally been programmed for February of each of the full years of the project with the geographic location changing each year. Details of the suggested venue, date and content of these conferences is currently being worked up and a working paper will shortly be submitted to the DfT with proposals for discussion.

2.6.2 There are also currently a number of other conference opportunities relating to Home Zones that are noted on the website.

2.7 Publications

2.7.1 No publications have yet been identified or produced.

2.8 Resources

2.8.1 Resource allocation was revised in the Inception Report and to date is progressing very much as expected. No major variations to the planned resources are anticipated at this stage and all work has been as envisaged within the project structure.

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3 LOCAL AUTHORITY PROGRESS

- 3.1.1 Over the last quarter the majority of Authorities have continued to be involved with consultation aspects associated with their Home Zone schemes. Many have held Public Meetings, scheme mock-ups and Fun Days over the summer months. Other Authorities are more advanced with the Plymouth scheme now complete and others such as the scheme by London Borough of Kingston upon Thames at the tender stage.
- 3.1.2 Reporting procedures have been established and simplified for both the financial and technical aspects of the project. These have taken some time to establish and even following visits to Authorities receipt of information is still sporadic and highly varied in content.
- 3.1.3 Of the 61 schemes selected, 59 authorities have submitted financial information and 58 have submitted progress update forms.
- 3.1.4 Early indications are that the programmes presented to date are continuing to slip and that the planned programmes are ambitious, especially in terms of assessing the level of consultation that is required to successfully implement these programmes.

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4 ISSUES AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

4.1.1 The initial period of the project has resulted in a number of issues being identified. These include:

- Consistency of financial submissions – a number of the Local Authorities are not updating their Financial profiles to take into account the invoices raised.
- Consistency of Reporting – the basic pro-formas have been simplified to aid completion and to provide text on progress made and problems encountered. These adjustments appeared to have assisted the Authorities. However, it is evident that some authorities are still not sure as to the extent of work or programming that will be involved in the ultimate implementation and this is shown in the level of detail provided.
- Local Authority Contacts – Since the Inaugural Meeting the remote contacts became sporadic and intended submissions did not always materialise. A programme of visits to 18 Authorities was developed and all but four visits have now taken place. This would appear to have aided the networking process and the Authorities to complete their submissions. However despite these meetings the content of a few returns are still a little sparse. Hopefully the improved and continued contact relationship will help to improve the quantity and quality of information provided at the end of the next quarter.
- Conferences – An intended date of February 2003 has been suggested for an initial conference to disseminate information on the Challenge projects. Social Research Associates has been contacted and expressed an interest in organising these conferences. Details of the suggested venue, date and content of these conferences is currently being worked up and a working paper will shortly be submitted to the DfT.

4.1.2 Over the coming quarter, the arrangements for a conference in February next year will be finalised and those authorities where difficulties are currently being experienced in maintaining adequate progress on schemes will be identified. Additional visits to selected authorities will be scheduled, again focussing on those where information is incomplete. In addition, we would hope to be able to clarify the situation regarding the payment of outstanding grant claims and defining the invoicing and reporting procedure more clearly.

4.1.3 Overall progress is being maintained, but concerns are evident that the achievements anticipated at the award of the challenge will not materialise. Good lessons are being learnt but greater networking between authorities needs to be developed. This is dependent upon staff time being available within the authorities when pressures on delivery are increasing.