



10.3 Piccadilly Circus Partnership Business Improvement District jurisdiction

It included not only business occupiers but many of the main property owners as well, all of which were charged a voluntary contribution until the partnership's formal constitution as a BID in 2005.

In spite of its ambitious aims, its programme of activities was actually quite modest. Given the limited funds obtained from voluntary contributions, there were no plans for extensive re-design or infrastructure works and emphasis was put on improving on-going management systems through small-scale initiatives, especially those addressing safety and cleanliness (reflecting broader government priorities).

Leicester Square Action Plan

However, in a clear demonstration of the fragmented nature of public space management in London, the area covered by PCP excluded most of Leicester Square. Instead, an action plan for changes in the design and management of the square was prepared by Westminster City Council concurrently with, but unrelated to, that of the neighbouring PCP.

The Leicester Square Action Plan was part of an urban renewal programme which stemmed from two comprehensive studies of London's West End: the 'West End Entertainment Impact Study' and the 'West End Public Spaces Study', both published in October 2001. The plan itself was adopted by Westminster Council in April 2002, with the hope that it would make the run-down but crowded Leicester Square:

once again the jewel in the crown of a truly world class city, a place characterised by its strong business base, vibrant local community, supporting infrastructure and its cultural attractiveness for the rest of the world.

(City of Westminster 2002a: 1)

The perceived problems of Leicester Square were in many ways similar to those of Times Square. Over the last few decades Leicester Square and

neighbouring Soho had become globally renowned late-night hedonistic areas, with a large concentration of night-life leisure establishments. In the late 1990s, in an attempt to create a 24-hour economy, Westminster Council granted licences to many large drinking establishments, unwittingly contributing to an increase in episodes of alcohol-fuelled anti-social behaviour. However, in a marked difference to Times Square, the increased seediness of the area did not lead to its abandonment by middle-class and corporate users and its takeover by minority groups, but caused instead an increase in conflicts and of pressure upon the physical infrastructure and social fabric of the space. As stated in the introduction of one of the studies referred to above:

The informal as well as the formal economy has boomed, creating ever growing problems of unlicensed street traders, buskers, beggars, squeegee merchants, fly posters and carders competing for limited pavement space whilst unlicensed clubs and tables and chairs add to the impression that there is quick money to be made, anything goes.

(EDAW 2001: 3)

Consequently, the measures put in place by the action plan tended to focus on the control of uses and users rather than on their replacement, and on the management of conflict among those same uses and users. The vision contained in the plan stressed 'a family atmosphere in Leicester Square, where at least one PG or U certificate film is being shown on any evening, al fresco dining is encouraged around the gardens, and an events programme is put in place (City of Westminster 2002b: 6). The measures adopted to bring about this vision relied on a more careful policy of licensing activities in and around the square and a more effective enforcement of existing regulations related to the use of public space.

As part of the action plan, overall management of the square was contracted out to a private security firm who employed a number of