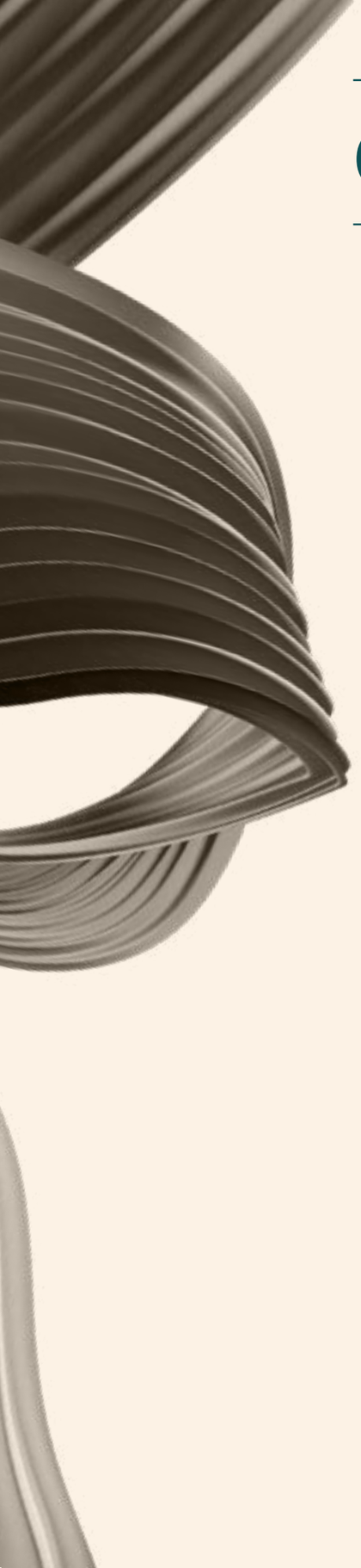
Bolton

VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

Year 2 Review





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Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy and Overview – Year 2 Review

The Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy 2024–2030 provides a long-term framework to support the development of Bolton's visitor economy.

The strategy recognises the visitor economy as a key driver of economic growth, local pride and community wellbeing, and aims to unlock its full potential through coordinated investment, partnership delivery, and a compelling offer that reflects the borough's unique strengths.

Delivery of the strategy to date has been guided by a three-year Delivery Plan (2024–2027) and supports the vision of the Bolton 2040 Borough Plan to make Bolton a 'thriving borough' where 'people want to live, work, study, invest and visit'. Building on progress to date, a refreshed Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy Delivery Plan for 2026–2028 is now being developed with partners to strengthen focus and support delivery as the programme moves into its next phase.

The refreshed Delivery Plan will consolidate and prioritise actions, focusing on Years 3 and 4 of the strategy, and aligning resources around the areas where coordinated delivery can strengthen focus to enable the greatest impact.

It will respond directly to local context and assets and continue to be structured around six strategic themes.

This Year 2 review summarises progress, early outcomes and learning from delivery to date, and is intended to inform the updated Delivery Plan for 2026–2028 and support continued momentum through partnership working and investment.



The strategy sets out a clear ambition:

To position Bolton as an attractive visitor destination, leveraging assets and opportunities to secure investment, drive visitor footfall and spend, enhance the quality of life of our residents and their positive perceptions and sense of pride in Bolton, and support vitality and growth in our business community.

Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy Logic Model

Current Context

Year 2 of delivering the Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy 2024-2030 concluded in March 2026. The Year 2 Review will inform a Delivery Plan Refresh for 2026–2028 (Years 3 and 4), with actions consolidated into a more targeted and deliverable programme, aligned to partner capacity and resources. Delivery is taking place in a fast-changing policy and economic environment, with ongoing cost pressures and shifting visitor behaviour, requiring agility, clearer prioritisation and coordinated partnership working to maintain momentum and maximise impact.

Inputs

The delivery of the strategy is enabled by a combination of local and regional resources:

- Council-led funding programmes including EDRFG, UKSPF (ending) and LAFG as its successor, plus Town of Culture and Levelling Up Fund
- Contributions from regional partners such as Marketing Manchester and GMCA
- Expertise and involvement from local businesses and wider partnerships
- Officer time, Bolton Council Officer resource, partner capacity, and governance infrastructure such as the Bolton Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)

Activities

Across the six strategic themes, the strategy sets out a broad range of actions:

- Programming and promoting festivals, events, and cultural activities
- Enhancing town centres through placemaking, meanwhile uses and creative lighting
- Marketing and packaging of local visitor experiences, attractions and products
- Developing the night-time economy and supporting new investment opportunities
- Strengthening the visibility of Bolton's major attractions and heritage offer
- Supporting business engagement, workforce development and strategic partnerships
- Improving data, digital tools and shared platforms such as Visit Bolton and joint ticketing systems



Outputs

Initial tangible outputs from these activities include:

- An increased number of themed markets, events and cultural programmes
- Delivery of new marketing campaigns, websites and shared digital platforms
- Feasibility studies completed for new infrastructure (hotels, venues, tourism offers)
- Business engagement networks established and activated
- Improved coordination through strategic forums such as the LVEP and Town Centre Boards
- Enhanced profile of Bolton's offer on regional and national visitor platforms

Outcomes

- Growth in visitor footfall and dwell time across Bolton's towns, green spaces, venues and major events
- Improved perception of Bolton as a safe, distinctive and attractive visitor destination
- Greater business participation in the visitor economy and more joined-up delivery
- Increased access and participation in culture, nature, and events among residents and underrepresented groups
- Stronger alignment between Bolton's local activity and regional/national visitor strategies

Long Term Impacts

- Sustainable growth in visitor economy GVA and job creation
- Increased visitors, visitor spend and longer stays, including through major events and overnight tourism
- Regenerated town centres and heritage assets
- Greater civic pride and community cohesion

Purpose of this Review

This report provides a light-touch review of Year 2 progress in delivering the Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy (2024–2030). It informs the refreshed draft Delivery Plan (2026–2028) focused on Years 3 and 4, where actions are being consolidated and prioritised to respond to a changing policy and economic context. The review provides a snapshot of achievements at the conclusion of Year 2, highlighting progress and informing the refreshed Delivery Plan for 2026-2028. Now that activity has finished its second year of delivery, the light touch review has four aims:

Aim 1 Provide a summary of Year 2 progress across each of the strategy's six thematic areas:

1. **Diversify the offer and image of town centres**
2. **Secure and capitalise on opportunities for major investment**
3. **Leverage active and nature-based tourism**
4. **Enhance the cultural offer and events strategy**
5. **Grow visitor produces and markets**
6. **Invest in enabling activity.**

Aim 2 Highlight areas of effective delivery and emerging barriers

Aim 3 Reflect on delivery coordination and stakeholder involvement

Aim 4 Offer high-level recommendations to support future priorities

The report is not intended as a full evaluation of the visitor economy or a detailed impact assessment. Rather, it offers a snapshot of progress and delivery readiness as the BVES is implemented, using the available monitoring information as its foundation.

Approach to the Year 2 Review

Each strategic theme was reviewed using Bolton Council's live Visitor Economy Delivery Plan tracker as the core evidence base informing progress. The tracker provides a consistent view of delivery across all actions and partners.

For each action, the tracker captures theme alignment, delivery partners, current status/progress, timeframes and progress notes. Where available, it also indicates whether activity is new or building on existing work and includes cost/effort indicators (low/medium/high).

The review combines quantitative data with qualitative insights to assess delivery and draw out the story behind the findings:

- **Quantitative position**: actions completed, underway or not started; patterns by theme; pace of delivery; and the mix of low/medium/high-cost activity (where recorded)
- **Delivery profile:** whether activity is new or building on existing work, and where delivery is front-loaded versus longer-term or dependent on external factors
- **Qualitative evidence:** progress notes and partner updates, including delivery dependencies, changes in context and emerging opportunities/risks
- **Synthesis**: translating insights into theme narratives, selecting key metrics and case studies, and identifying priorities to shape the refreshed 2026–2028 delivery plan

"Bolton's rich cultural heritage, green spaces, sports offer and vibrant events shape who we are as a community. This mission is about strengthening these experiences, improving access for all residents, and celebrating what makes Bolton unique."

Bolton Vision 2040

Thematic Areas of Delivery

The six thematic areas of delivery in the strategy are to:

1. **Diversify the Offer and Image of Town Centres**, through initiatives such as creative lighting, themed markets, and use of meanwhile spaces.
2. **Secure and Capitalise on Opportunities for Major Investment,** including infrastructure upgrades, hotel development, and flagship event bids like the 2035 Ryder Cup.
3. **Leverage Active and Nature-Based Tourism,** by packaging the borough's green spaces, walking and cycling infrastructure, and sporting assets into marketable visitor experiences.
4. **Enhance the Cultural Offer and Events Strategy,** building on Bolton's diverse communities and cultural assets to create a vibrant, year-round programme of events.
5. **Grow Visitor Products and Markets,** with a focus on music tourism, family-friendly experiences, and business-related visits.
6. **Invest in Enabling Activity,** including branding, governance, data, and accommodation improvements to underpin sustainable growth.

Simplifying Delivery Actions

The BVES outlines circa 49 key actions to enable growth and success in visitor numbers, resident and visitor experience, economic impact and employment and broader regeneration. These actions have helped to guide the plan and provided detailed structure for the initial implementation and delivery in Year 1 and Year 2.

As the Visitor Economy Strategy has evolved and Year 2 has completed delivery, there has been an effort to consolidate actions to ensure efficiency and more accurate tracking.

Each theme outlined in this report shows the new broad actions that will be utilised in future delivery. In total there are now 20 actions, enabling a more agile approach which is easier to monitor progress against.

In evaluating successes in Year 2 the review examines the original 49 key actions, and these have been used to inform progress under each theme.

Theme 1:
Diversify the Offer and Image of Town Centres

Of the 12 actions, one has been completed (Visit Bolton website). The majority of actions in this theme are low cost, with only four actions identified as having higher cost implications, and two having medium cost implications. Over half of the actions in this theme build on existing activity, capitalising on a strong foundation of success.

Success markers: The Visit Bolton website is live and momentum is building; with most low-cost actions underway and existing activity being scaled to deliver visible town-centre impact.

Showcase: Crompton Place

Investment Background

Crompton Place is a flagship £200–£250 million mixed-use redevelopment at the heart of Bolton town centre, occupying a prominent 4-acre site between Victoria Square and Bradshawgate. Formerly a 1970s shopping centre, the site was acquired by Bolton Council in 2018 to unlock a step-change in town centre regeneration and investor confidence.

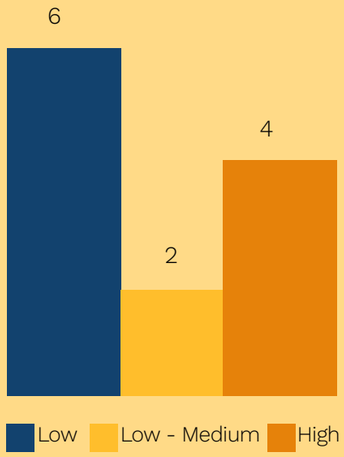
Contributions to Theme 1

Unlocking major investment and hotel delivery: Securing £200–£250m of mixed-use investment and delivering a new town-centre hotel, alongside homes, leisure and employment space.

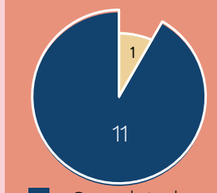
Resetting the town centre: By improving connectivity, public realm and visitor, Crompton Place provides the physical platform needed to support town centre growth.

Action Insights

Cost Implications



Action Status



5 New Activities

7 Activities build on existing activity

Increasing Visitor Numbers at local attractions

(August 2024-August 2025):

+16% at Bolton Museum

+8% at Smithills Hall

Delivery Successes

Visit Bolton website launched to businesses in November 2024. Rolled out to consumers in March 2025.

Since the website launch: 327 Listings

Social media engagement reached 12.6k

May 2025 – May 2026 saw 63k unique users

The initial phases of the Digital Wayfinding Infrastructure and Light Up Bolton projects were delivered in 2025/2026. These projects enhance the town centre experience by improving navigation for pedestrians and cyclists, up-to date information, connectivity and accessibility, while creating a vibrant, welcoming environment through innovative digital signage and attractive lighting installations.

Crompton Place demolition due to start Summer 2026 following the appointment of developer partner, Federated Hermes MEPC and demolition contractor Rhodar with the aim of completing the demolition programme in 2027.

Bolton

Visitor Economy Strategy Year 2 Review

Bolton

Timeline

1971

Crompton Place opens as the Arndale Centre in Bolton town centre

2010s

Changing retail behaviour reduced footfall and viability, large parts of the centre are underused.

2018

Bolton Council purchases Crompton Place for £14.8m.

First redevelopment approval, £250m mixed useredevelopment including: hotel, homes, office, retail, leisure space

2018-25

Bolton Council undertakes multi-year programme of tenant relocation

2020

March: Formal plans submitted for building demolition.
August: Planning approval granted for demolition

2020-21

Development stalled due to Covid-19

2025

£200m-£250m updated development proposals including: 340 homes, 110 room hotel, circa 8k sq. ft office space and ground-floor leisure and hospitality

2026

Demolition work begins.
Demolition phase includes:

- £1m+ spend with local suppliers
- Two Bolton apprenticeship roles created

2026

New homes built to support town-centre living, public realm improved. Mixed-use commercial space created to support growth and development in the town centre

2027-Early 2030s

2027

Spring-Summer demolition expected to be completed

Theme 2: Secure & Capitalise on Opportunities for Major Investment

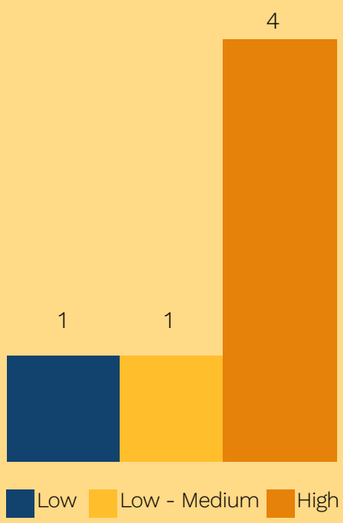
Much of the activity within this theme revolves around maximising impact of investment for broader regeneration aims. All activities are currently underway with 4 out of 6 actions classed as “new activity”. Most activity in this theme have significant cost implications, making it essential to ensure value for money.

Success markers: Four of six actions are underway, with new activity mobilised and delivery forums in place to maximise investment impact and value for money.



Action Insights

Cost Implications



Activity Status

100% of Activity is “ongoing”

4 New Activities

2 Activities build on existing activity

Delivery Successes

Bolton Town Centre: Regeneration projects creating a more vibrant and attractive centre. Completion of Deansgate Gardens and ongoing work to build 400+ homes, a hotel, cafés, restaurants bars and commercial space at Church Wharf.

Attendance at UKREiiF 2026 and activity by the Economic Alliance Board is driving home key successes and capitalising on existing activity.

UKREiiF THE UK’s REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE FORUM

the wellsprings

A new innovation hub and incubation centre for creative and tech startups. Working in collaboration with Oxford Innovation Space to bring new businesses and well-paying jobs into the centre.

Early Doors Programme (funded via UKSPF) established: Music gigs and a regular programme of performances.

Bolton

Showcase: NorthFold Growth Corridor

Investment Background
Launched at MPIM 2025, the NorthFold Growth Corridor spans Bolton to Wigan. Within Bolton, Northfold aims to transform 1m sqft of development in Bolton into an international sports and leisure destination and hub for emerging innovation sectors of health and food while also serving as a model for sustainable housing development.

Bolton Town Centre: A £1bn regeneration programme aimed at delivering 5,000 new residents, alongside a blended offer of retail, leisure, hospitality and employment uses.

NorthFold Food Innovation Centre: An emerging opportunity to establish a national hub for food innovation and advanced manufacturing.

Hulton Park: A 700-year-old estate being revitalised through new housing, hotel provision, retail, sport, leisure and community uses, with ambitions to host the 2035 Ryder Cup and other major events.

Health Innovation Bolton: NorthFold's primary health innovation zone, focused on wellness, prevention and new models of healthcare delivery.

Complementary Investments outside of Bolton

Wigan Town Centre: Developing a renewed destination that integrates retail and leisure, with major schemes including Wigan Galleries, Cotton Works and the future Station Gateway.

Haigh Hall: The historic estate is undergoing transformation to become a nationally recognised centre for arts, culture and heritage

Northfold contributions to Theme 2

- **Attracting major investment:** The NorthFold Growth Corridor provides a clear, large-scale proposition to attract private and institutional investment across sport, leisure, innovation and housing.
- **Regional funding for major projects:** Greater Manchester Good Growth Fund allocations of £17m to support development of Hexagon Park and £69.8m for construction of Park Avenue link road.
- **Enabling supporting infrastructure and hotels:** The scale of development supports the case for infrastructure upgrades, hotel provision and services needed to accommodate growth and visitors.
- **Supporting flagship event ambitions:** Sports and leisure assets strengthen Bolton's potential to secure major event bids, including the 2035 Ryder Cup.
- **Investing in future-growth sectors:** Health and food innovation diversify investment and align development with high-value, emerging sectors.



Theme 3: Lever Active and Nature Based Tourism

Much of the activity within this theme revolves around leveraging active or nature-based tourism. All activity is currently underway with 3 out of 5 actions classed as “new activity”. This theme is a associated with higher cost with two activities classed as having high-cost implications. Maximising the impact of these activities is therefore crucial to ensuring value for money.

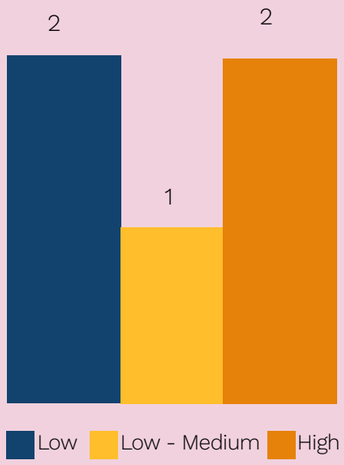
Success markers: All actions are underway, with new activity translating into clear, investable delivery plans that strengthen value for money.



Visitor Economy Strategy Year 2 Review

Action Insights

Cost Implications



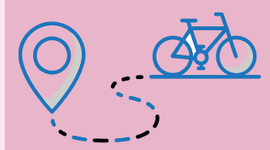
Activity Status

100% of Activity is “ongoing”

3 New Activities

2 Activities build on existing activity

Delivery Successes



Funding bid for the first **autonomous vehicle scheme** in GM submitted December 2025, which includes enhancements to the walking and cycling route between Bolton Town Centre and Bolton Royal Hospital.

£475k match funding

Ringfenced Pride in Place funding to support the refurbishment of Rock Hall



Commissioned a video promoting Bolton’s parks and green spaces as the ideal setting for active and nature-based tourism. Widely promoted and shared on social media via an aligned marketing campaign, reaching a large regional and national audience.

Bolton

Showcase: Rock Hall

Investment Background
Rock Hall Revival is a partnership between Bolton Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust to bring the derelict Grade II listed Rock Hall back into use as a sustainable community heritage hub and visitor destination by 2031. The project will restore and sensitively expand the building, creating new spaces to celebrate the area's heritage and natural environment. Set next to Moses Gate Country Park in Farnworth, Rock Hall has the potential to become a focal point for heritage-led, nature-based visits linked to walking and outdoor recreation. In 2025/26, the Rock Hall project completed its Development Phase and in July 2026 was successful in securing £4.4m major grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of its development phase.

Activity-Led Engagement and Experiential Tourism
If funded, the project will deliver a four-year programme of activities focused on Rock Hall and Moses Gate Country Park, bringing together local history, landscape, wildlife and community stories.

This programme is designed to encourage exploration, participation and repeat visits, supporting learning, walking and informal outdoor activity while strengthening Rock Hall's role as a gateway to thewider country park.

Rock Hall – Nature Focused and Heritage Tourism Offer

The project will see Rock Hall fully renovated and sensitively expanded, creating a distinctive visitor destination that complements and enhances surrounding natural assets. Key elements of the scheme include:



- **Adaptive reuse of a historic asset:** Restoration of Rock Hall as an accessible heritage venue, safeguarding a significant listed building at risk.
- **Expanded community and visitor space:** A significant increase in usable internal space for exhibitions, learning and events.



- **Enhanced gardens and outdoor areas:** New and improved gardens, plus a rooftop outdoor space, strengthening connections between the building and the park landscape.
- **Creative interpretation and exhibitions:** Engaging storytelling focused on local industrial, social and environmental history.



- **Integration with Moses Gate Country Park:** Positioning Rock Hall as a gateway to walking, cycling and nature-based experiences within the wider country park.

Rock Hall contributions to Theme 3

- **Leveraging green and heritage assets:** Repurposing a listed building within a country park setting to create a distinctive destination.
- **Supporting active tourism:** Strengthening links to walking, cycling and outdoor recreation in and around Moses Gate Country Park.
- **Packaging experiences:** Combining heritage, exhibitions and outdoor activity into a coherent, visitor offer.
- **Encouraging sustainable visitation:** Promoting low-impact, nature-based tourism rooted in local landscape and community narratives.



Theme 4: Enhance the Cultural Offer and Events Strategy

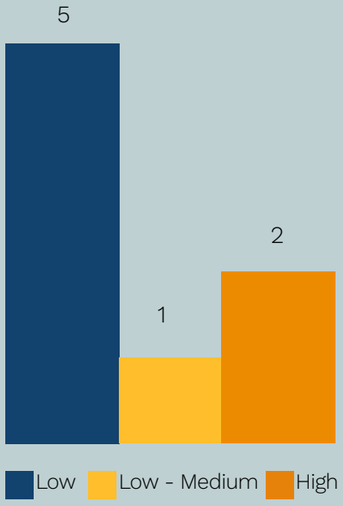
All activity is currently underway with 4 out of 8 actions classed as “new activity”. Most actions in this theme are low cost, with only 2 actions identified as having higher cost implications. This suggests some relatively low cost but high impact activity under this theme. Over half of the actions in this theme build on existing activity, meaning a strong foundation of success can be capitalised on.

Success markers: All actions are underway, with a strong mix of new delivery and established foundations creating low-cost, high-impact momentum.



Action Insights

Cost Implications

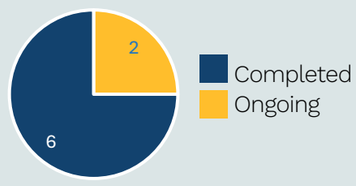


Activity Status

4 New Activities

4 Activities build on existing activity

Action Status



Delivery Successes

GM Tourism Accelerator Programme

99
Attendees supported over 8 sessions

23
SMEs supported to access development opportunities they may not previously have engaged with

£1m funding
Creative People and Places bid submitted to ACE for £1M funding for communities to deliver cultural activity across the Borough

Events funded by GM Town of Culture Status:

Put Big Light On 2024

Bolton Gala 2025

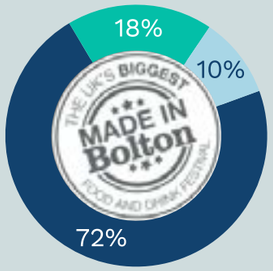
29 Grants awarded funded by LAFG –range of activities including art workshops, filming, dance and music projects

Showcase: Bolton Food and Drink Festival 2025

Event Overview
Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2025, the Bolton Food and Drink Festival has become the largest event of its kind in the UK and a flagship feature of Bolton's annual events calendar. Over two decades, the festival has grown significantly in both scale and profile, playing a key role in supporting the district's visitor economy, strengthening Bolton's reputation as a destination for major live events, and delivering wide-ranging economic, social and cultural benefits.

The 2025 festival was delivered across Bolton town centre and featured 179 food and drink traders alongside a diverse mix of arts and crafts stalls. The programme combined nationally recognised chef demonstrations with live music, entertainment and a strong emphasis on inclusive, family-friendly activity. This breadth of offer continues to attract large and diverse audiences, encouraging visitors to spend more time in Bolton and supporting businesses across the district.

Visitor Draw



554,600
visitors
the highest recorded figure since 2022

41%
attended with children or young people aged 18 or under

- from Bolton
- from the rest of GM
- from the rest of the UK

179 **Traders with c.660 employees onsite**

£9.7m **Visitor spend onsite**

£4.9m **Visitor spend offsite**

£7.6m direct GVA generated

£11.6m GVA + multiplier effect

Source: Bolton Food and Drink Festival 2025 Impact Assessment, January 2026, GC Insight

Bolton Food and Drink Festival contributions to Theme 4

- **Flagship cultural event:** The festival acts as a major anchor event, strengthening Bolton's cultural offer and reinforcing its capacity to host large-scale, high-quality live events.
- **Celebrating diversity and inclusion:** A wide range of traders, cuisines and activities reflects Bolton's diverse communities and supports inclusive cultural participation.
- **Supporting year-round activity:** As an established annual event, the festival contributes to a consistent programme of cultural and events activity across the year.
- **Enhancing destination identity:** National recognition and strong visitor appeal help raise Bolton's profile as a vibrant cultural and events destination.



Theme 5: Grow Visitor Products and Markets

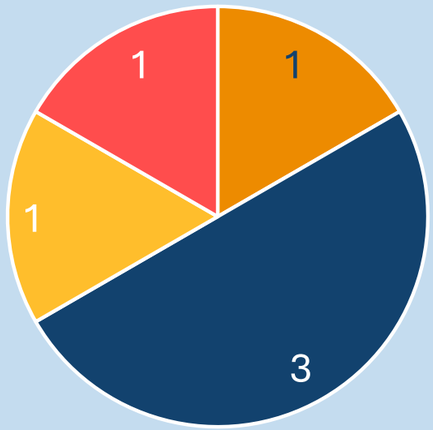
Much of the activity within this theme revolves around working with tourism and hospitality businesses. 3 out of 6 actions were classed as “new activity”. And 3 build on existing activity, meaning a strong foundation of success can be capitalised on. 3 actions were classed as ‘ongoing’ and one was completed, one was cancelled and one is yet to start. This theme is a higher cost theme with two activities classed as having high-cost implications and two having medium-cost implications. Maximising the impact of these activities is therefore crucial to ensuring value for money.

Success markers: With 4 actions ongoing or complete, there is strong momentum in this



Action Insights

Action Status

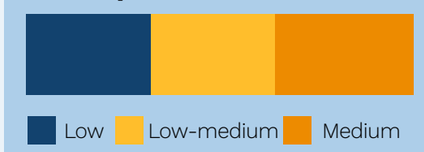


Activity Status

3 New Activities

3 Activities build on existing activity

Cost Implications



Delivery Successes

Bolton Film Office Social Media Impact

Growth of social media **454** followers.

70 new filming locations

High-profile cast, including Sheridan Smith, Michelle Keegan, Dominic Cooper and Roy Keane.

Supported student films, documentaries and HETV drama.

Bolton Library and Museum Service and Octagon Theatre developed programmes together to support a Family Friendly Portfolio.

3 years’ funding
Filming generated an estimated £1.2 million to the local economy – supporting employment, retail, and supply chains.

Expanded asset database of filming locations,
Identifying filming locations which celebrate the whole borough.

Created bespoke promotional film to advertise filming in Bolton.

Showcase: Bolton Film Office and Skills Impact

Background to the Activity
Launched in October 2025, the Bolton Film Office provides a coordinated, film-friendly gateway for screen productions filming in the borough. It forms part of Bolton's wider enabling infrastructure, supporting place branding, local governance, sector data, and skills pipelines that underpin sustainable visitor economy growth. Linking film and TV production with education, skills and early-career development, the Film Office ensures that screen activity delivers longer-term local value beyond individual productions

Film Office: Skills Focused Activity

Since launch, the Film Office has supported 31 productions, including photography, student films, short films, high-end TV drama and commercial shoots. Student films and production as well as career engagement, work-experience and awareness raising have placed young people and skills at the heart of the film office's early successes:

8 university student films from the University of Greater Manchester, University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University

5 work experience requests received to date

4 careers presentations and events delivered across local high schools, higher education and creative arts groups. Presented at the Bolton Property Forum and establishing relationships with local estate agents and property owners; putting vacant properties to use. Attended Industry events, including the annual FOCUS industry event, Filming in England Industry mixer, and GMCA events connecting with national and international industry professionals.

1 provided filming location for community-led youth film making project, providing direct access to professional facilities.

1 college production from Cardinal Newman College (Preston), working with the University of Greater Manchester

Bolton Film Office contributions to Theme 5

- **Investing in skills pipelines:** Raising awareness of screen careers and providing practical filming experience for students and young people.
- **Strengthening enabling infrastructure:** Providing governance, coordination and a professional front door for the screen sector.
- **Supporting sustainable growth:** Linking production activity to local talent, businesses and future workforce development.
- **Enhancing place brand:** Positioning Bolton as a creative, film-friendly destination with emerging screen tourism potential.

Skills, Branding and Wider Visitor Economy Impacts

Beyond education engagement, the Film Office has delivered broader enabling benefits that support Theme 6 objectives:

Local creative supply chain development: 3 Bolton-based companies or freelancers commissioned for photography and videography work

Industry positioning and governance: Sponsorship of a major Manchester screen-industry networking event, directly leading to a recce and filming request in Bolton

Screen tourism and place marketing: Hosted a set-jet visit for a popular podcast; a screen tourism advertorial placed in a national publication distributed via hotels and VisitBritain channels from April 2026; a high-profile World Cup advert featured a number of Bolton landmarks and featuring high-profile football talent.



Theme 6: Invest in Enabling Activity

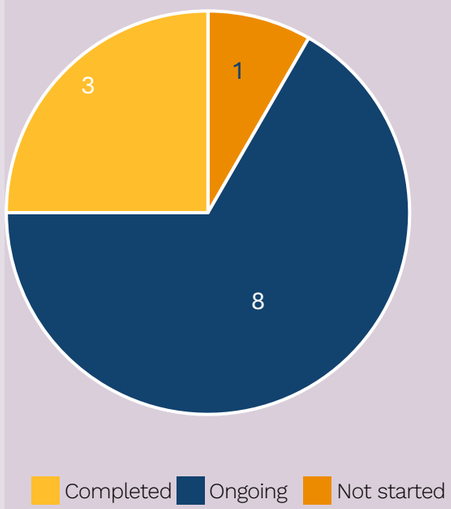
Much of the activity within this theme revolves around improving visitor infrastructure and strengthening the tourism sector as a driver of growth. 8 out of 12 actions were classed as “new activity” and 4 actions build on existing activity. 8 actions were classed as ‘ongoing’, 3 had not yet started, and 1 was complete. This theme is a lower cost theme with 8 out of 12 actions classed as ‘low’, suggesting mostly relatively low cost but high impact activity under this theme.

Success markers: This theme has a lot of new activity a lot of which is ongoing (8 actions) or complete (1 action). Most actions also have low cost implications.



Action Insights

Action Status

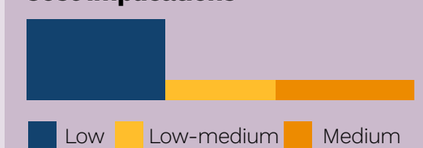


Activity Status

8 New Activities

4 Activities build on existing activity

Cost Implications



Delivery Successes

Brand Bolton

4 Ambassador breakfasts

137 Attendees

5000 copies
Of the Insiders Guide have been distributed across venues in GM.

16,000
wearebolton.co.uk website users

1200+
Brand Bolton Toolkit downloads

275+ Ambassadors championing Bolton locally,

Bolton

New Place Brand for Bolton was launched on the 27th February with 125+ organisations in attendance.

A Year of Dates: Bolton Edition produced & available commercially with visitor economy focused date ideas

The Place Brand Manager started in April, and the first We Are Bolton ambassador meeting scheduled on 13 May

Bolton was in the first phase of bus franchising in GM and buses are performing better than when they were under private operation.

Bolton

Showcase: Marketing Manchester Visitor Economy Accelerator Programme

Background to the Activity
The Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Accelerator Programme, led by Marketing Manchester and funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, provides fully funded business support to strengthen tourism and hospitality sectors across Greater Manchester. The programme focuses on enabling activity, including business capability, market intelligence, collaboration and destination marketing, to underpin long-term, sustainable visitor economy growth. Bolton has been an early participant since the programme's launch in August 2024, with targeted activity designed to support local hospitality, accommodation, leisure and visitor attraction businesses to improve quality, resilience and market reach. The programme is delivered in partnership with local councils and provides a direct link into wider Growth Company and Business Growth Hub support services.

Activity-Led Engagement and Business Enablement
The Accelerator Programme delivers a structured offer of workshops, webinars, 1-to-1 business support and networking, focused on improving business performance and the overall visitor experience. Across Greater Manchester, the programme has delivered 32 in-person workshops and 5 webinars, supporting over 140 visitor economy organisations with almost 1,000 hours of direct business support. In Bolton specifically, activity to date includes:

9 sessions delivered, including workshops and webinars

113 attendees, representing 37 unique Bolton-based organisations

More than **230** hours of direct support and peer networking

Workshops have covered topics such as changing visitor markets, digital marketing, AI, experiential tourism, financial management and customer experience, helping businesses adapt to evolving visitor expectations and market conditions. Many Bolton participants were introduced to wider Growth Hub support for the first time, strengthening long-term engagement with business support services.

VEAP contributions to Theme 6

- **Strengthening enabling infrastructure:** Building business capability, collaboration and leadership within Bolton's visitor economy through fully funded support.
- **Supporting branding and market intelligence:** Connecting local businesses to destination marketing, data and visitor insights through Marketing Manchester.
- **Underpinning sustainable growth:** Improving quality, resilience and customer experience across hospitality, accommodation and visitor attractions.
- **Creating a pipeline for future investment:** Better-prepared businesses and a stronger destination offer support hotel growth, product development and wider visitor economy ambitions.



Reflections on Delivery

Partnership Working
Relationships with political leadership and council teams have strengthened, with more consistent engagement and joint problem-solving. A clearer shared ambition is emerging, with stronger alignment around major catalyst opportunities (e.g., Ryder Cup/Hulton Park, town centre regeneration). Partners are also making greater use of existing forums and networks to coordinate activity, share intelligence and sustain momentum.

Delivery Mechanisms
There is a stronger focus on a consolidated set of priority actions for 2026–2028, improving clarity and deliverability. Practical delivery tools are increasingly embedded (delivery tracker/ RAG, key milestones and clearer ownership), supporting pace and accountability. Governance and coordination continue to mature, with opportunities to streamline routes to decision-making and reduce duplication.

Delivery Success Highlight
Crompton Place is helping unlock major town-centre investment and strengthening the platform for a new hotel and supporting leisure and employment space.

Delivery Success Highlight
Momentum is building around the Ryder Cup / Hulton Park opportunity, strengthening the profile of Bolton and creating a clearer pipeline for future visitor investment and event-led growth.

Delivery shift
As Year 2 has closed, the delivery approach has moved from a long list of actions to a simplified, prioritised action plan for 2026–2028. Consolidating actions improves clarity, strengthens ownership and makes progress easier to track through the delivery tracker and milestones, while keeping the original intent and outcomes in view.

Conclusion

Overall Position at Year 2

Year 2 has delivered strong progress and increased momentum across partners, with more consistent joint working and clearer alignment around key opportunities. Use of the delivery tracker has strengthened transparency and accountability, providing a shared view of status and progress and helping evidence where delivery is advancing and where issues need to be addressed.

Continued investment is essential to deliver the key priorities of the Visitor Economy Strategy and sustain momentum against its six key thematics and long-term objectives. Since the strategy launched in 2024, the need to secure external funding has become increasingly important, including through the Economic Development Regeneration Flexible Grant (EDRFG) UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the Local Authority Flexible Grant for Place and Growth (LAFG). Establishing a stable and diversified funding base will be critical to enabling successful delivery, supporting future development and maintaining positive outcomes.

Lessons and Future Considerations

As Year 2 has closed, the delivery approach has shifted from a long list of actions to a simplified, prioritised action plan for 2026–2028. Consolidating and prioritising actions improves clarity, strengthens ownership and makes it easier to demonstrate and monitor progress through the delivery tracker and key milestones, while maintaining a clear focus on our strategic intent and outcomes.



FIND OUT MORE

Please get in touch with us to find out more about our Visitor Economy Strategy

Email us:

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