Bolton

VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

Delivery Plan
2026-2028



August 2026

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01

Introduction and Purpose

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

BOLTON IS BORN TO PERFORM

We're changing, thinking, and doing things differently.

Bolton can take full advantage of what it does best: radiating influence, building confidence, cultivating strong leadership, developing new relationships, bringing business and place together.



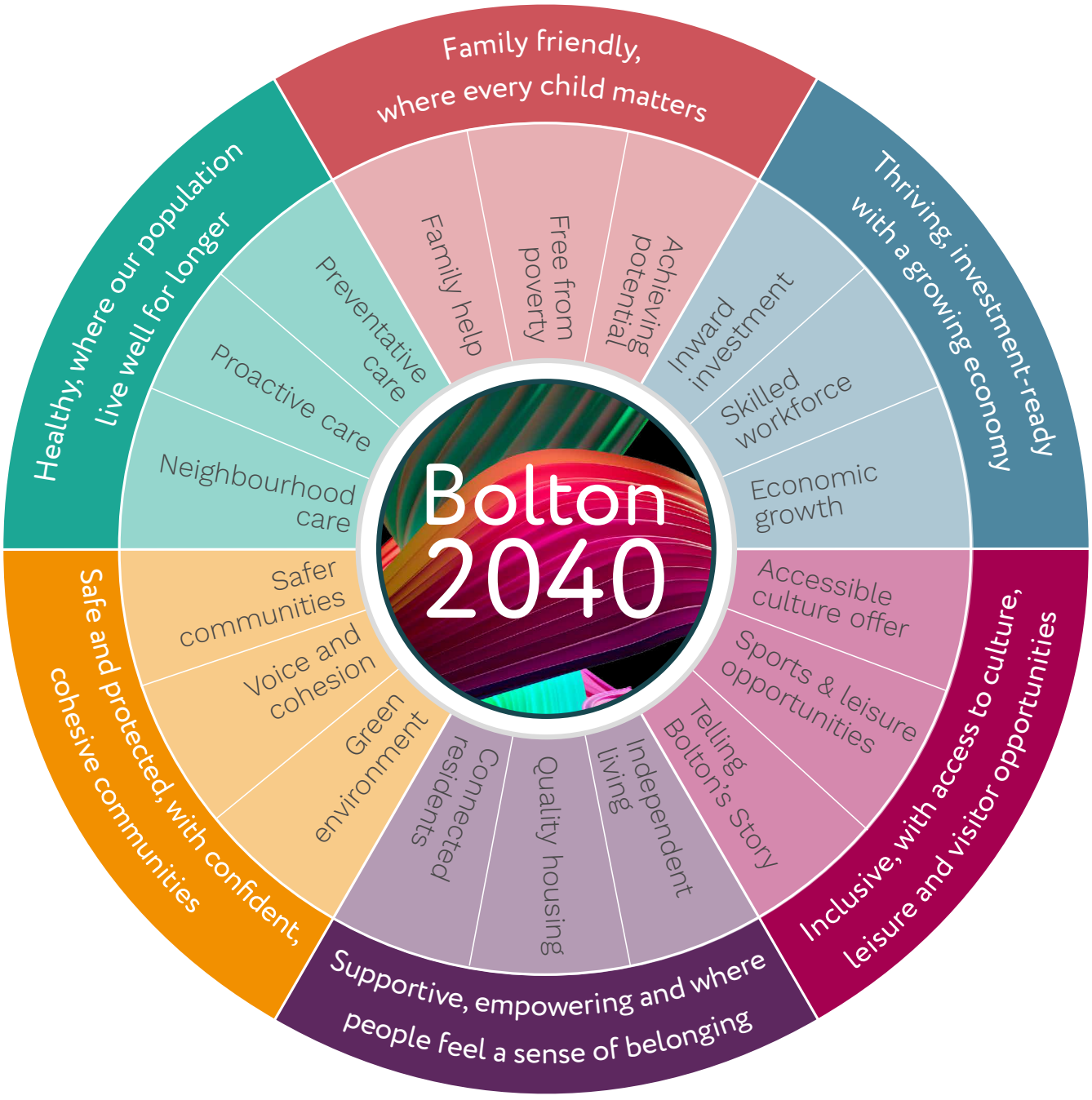


Strategic Framework
BOLTON'S STORY

The Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy (VES) 2024-2030 is one of a series of strategies and programmes that provide a framework to deliver against the Bolton 2040 Borough Plan.

Bolton 2040 establishes a roadmap for transforming our community into a place where everyone can thrive, underpinned by six missions:

BOLTON 2040 MISSION



The visitor economy has a vital role to play in supporting delivery of these missions.

The Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy 2024-2030 provides a strategic framework for the development of the visitor economy sector in the borough to 2030, setting out a statement of our ambition to position the borough as an attractive visitor destination, leveraging our 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.

The strategy sets out the ambition to enhance the visitor offer to maximise the potential of the visitor economy as a driver of economic growth and regeneration framed around six themes for intervention:

SIX THEMES FOR INTERVENTION

THEME 1: Diversify the Offer and Image of Town Centres

THEME 2: Secure and Capitalise on Opportunities for Major Investment

THEME 3: Lever Active and Nature Based Tourism

Bolton 2040

THEME 6: Invest in Enabling Activity

THEME 5: Grow Visitor Products and Markets

THEME 4: Enhance the Cultural Offer and Events Strategy

The Strategy is a partnership document, co-produced with Bolton Council leading consultation with stakeholders across the borough, guided by Marketing Manchester in their role as the city region's official Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) to ensure direct alignment with regional strategy. As such, collaboration lies at the heart of the Strategy and is the foundation of the Delivery Plan.

The first two years of delivery were guided by a Delivery Plan intended to span the first four years of delivery (2025-2028). An independent annual review has been completed for Year 1 and 2 and (in Year 2) highlighted the need for a refreshed delivery plan focused on the next two years of delivery (Year 3 and 4). The Visitor Economy Strategy is being delivered in a rapidly changing policy environment and economic context which the Delivery Plan needs to respond flexibly to. A refreshed delivery plan supports agility and responsiveness to this context, specifically ensuring:

- **Better alignment with funding and policy cycles,** supporting annual and medium-term financial planning, bidding windows and match funding requirements, and evolving national and regional priorities
- **Greater flexibility to respond to trends and drivers** in the visitor economy, including cost of living pressures, changing consumer behaviour, and national policy shifts. A two-year horizon allows Bolton to respond to these market signals and intervene accordingly
- **Delivery capacity,** focusing on prioritisation of deliverable actions

As such, the two-year Delivery Plan (2026-2028) will support focused implementation in the short term against the longer-term strategic ambition of the Visitor Economy Strategy. It has been developed through consultation with a range of stakeholders to develop the detail of planned activity. It establishes a collaborative framework through which partners and stakeholders can work together to deliver against the vision, themes and outcomes put forward in the strategy.



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Action Plan

The following action plan focuses on activity in Years 3 and 4 of the Visitor Economy Strategy, framed around each of the six thematic areas. Through consultation with lead officers and wider stakeholders the extensive number of actions identified in the Year 1 and 2 delivery plan have been consolidated and reframed to a more targeted number of deliverable actions that are reflective of today's economic and policy context.

Each theme is considered in turn, identifying existing activity already underway supporting delivery in addition to identifying new activity to be delivered through the Visitor Economy Strategy Delivery Plan for the period 2026-2028.

THEME 1:
Diversify the Offer and Image of Town Centres



Action 1a: Supporting Culture and Leisure-Led Regeneration in Town Centres

Bolton is harnessing culture and leisure to breathe new life into its town centre and district high streets. This approach – investing in arts and heritage, events and sports, libraries and museums, green spaces and a vibrant evening economy – directly supports the Bolton 2040 Vision for a thriving, inclusive, healthy, and safe borough. By placing culture and leisure at the heart of regeneration (alongside new housing, transport improvements and business investment), Bolton is creating lively, welcoming places that attract people and businesses, celebrate local identity and heritage, and improve quality of life for all residents and visitors.

Building on Existing Activity

- The Bolton Vision Partnership launched the **Bolton 2040 Vision**, setting out a shared ambition for the future of the borough centred around six missions and guided by three pillars of prevention, investment, and growth to ensure Bolton becomes a place where everyone can thrive.
- Bolton Council has focused on **activating vacant spaces** in Bolton Town Centre through strategic investments and by utilising major events, such as the Bolton Food and Drink Festival, to showcase available opportunities to the hospitality sector.
- **Major regeneration schemes** in Bolton Town Centre are helping to diversify the town centre offer through a mix of hospitality, leisure and residential uses to boost town centre footfall, this can be seen at Deansgate Gardens

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A culture and leisure-led approach to regeneration in Bolton is creating a catalyst for positive change. It animates empty shops and public spaces, drives growth and investment, and builds a vibrant sense of community. This approach will support diversified uses, encourage footfall and spend.
Approach	• Ensuring masterplans/regeneration frameworks articulate the ambition for culture and leisure within town and district centres • Delivering existing and securing new investment to support the culture and leisure offer in centres • Activating meanwhile use strategies and activity during phases of redevelopment and change to test demand, diversify the offer and support growth in the visitor economy • Wrapping prominent buildings and vacant sites to support core narrative, image and attractiveness
Targeting of activity	• Town and District Centres • Sector focus on retail, food and beverage, arts and crafts
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Developers / investors, commercial agents, VCFSE sector, Town Councils
Next Steps <12 months	• Bring forward the regeneration framework for Crompton Place at the heart of the town centre in line with the new 2040 vision set out in the Bolton Blueprint 2040 report. • Continue to raise the profile and VE opportunities within Bolton through existing forums i.e. Visitor Economy Partnership. • Advance the audit of vacant sites in Bolton Town Centre to support Bolton brand wrapping to improve perception in regeneration areas, targeting prominent sites. • Commission Town Centre Murals in Bolton and Farnworth, utilising Pride in Place funding.

Action Outputs	• Masterplans/regeneration frameworks developed • Carry out a cultural asset mapping project to understand available spaces and potential uses for cultural activity • Meanwhile use strategies/activities developed • No. of buildings/sites wrapped
Medium Term Outcomes	• £ investment secured • Improved perceptions of Bolton • Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Increased visitor spend
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased GVA • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved quality of life

Action 1b: Ensuring attractive and safe places to visit

The Bolton VES seeks to secure a vibrant and safe borough that attracts people to visit, live, work, study and invest in the area. Ensuring welcoming and secure town and district centres can support economic vitality and footfall, increase dwell time and visitor numbers, and raise investor confidence.

Building on Existing Activity

- Recent work has centred on **improving public spaces** to enhance safety and visitor experience for local communities. These enhancements are part of the 'Brand Bolton' strategy providing a consistent, branded experience. Key features included smart, digital wayfinding totems providing interactive, up-to-date information, new and improved signage supporting improved pedestrian and cyclist navigation and upgraded lighting. In addition, strengthened safety measures have been implemented through the installation of new defibrillators and CCTV cameras.
- The **Late Night Levy (LNL)** came into effect in Bolton on the 1st February 2025. The Levy targets businesses operating between 3-6am, primarily on Bradshawgate, to fund policing and cleaning costs. Approximately 39 premises including bars, takeaways and supermarkets are in scope. The revenue raised is used to offset the costs of policing and cleaning up the town centre.
- The **Best Bar None** initiative has been introduced in Bolton. Supported by the Home Office, this initiative accredits hospitality and drink venues for their excellence in safety, customer service, and responsible alcohol management practices.
- **Light Up Bolton** investment is supporting improved safety and security, increasing visibility and illuminating public spaces as lively, engaging and welcoming areas, and facilitating effective wayfinding, helping people to navigate the centre in the evening.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Making Bolton's centres more attractive can support the borough's long-term success, with busy, appealing high streets encouraging visitation, strengthening identity and distinctive character, encouraging pride and supporting quality of life. The night-time economy presents an opportunity for increased visitation and business growth however this sector can also contribute to problems such as anti-social behaviour and litter. This requires targeted intervention to nurture the opportunities presented by the night-time economy whilst mitigating the challenges.
Approach	• Invest in enhanced public realm and lighting to facilitate attractive and safe spaces • Ensure visitor welcome and basics (toilets, wayfinding, visitor information, quality offer etc) are in place to support visitation • Multi agency engagement to support coordinated response to ensuring safety in Bolton's town and district centres to support visitation and positive image and perception • Implement planned initiatives to tackle known challenges and hot spots (LNL, Best Bar None etc)
Targeting of activity	• Town and District Centres • Key Gateways • Target groups (linked to issues associated with antisocial behaviour, or supporting accessibility)
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA (Night Time Economy Office, Business Growth Hub), GM Police, GM LVEP, VCFSE sector, Town Councils

Next Steps <12 months	• Continued implementation of the Late Night Levy, working with GMCA to reflect on licensing issues and challenges and roll-out of the LNL • Establish the After Hours Forum in Bolton, building on the approach in Manchester, to support hospitality businesses within the night-time economy to build resilience, adapt to change and thrive • Planned installation of CCTV in Moses Gate Country Park and Moss Bank Park to enhance safety and reduce crime/ fear of crime, encouraging increased visitation for leisure and recreation • Complete Creative Lighting Strategy for Bolton (lit up buildings, totems) • Continue to build upon Light Up Bolton with further investment supporting positive perceptions of safety and effective wayfinding (safety lighting) • Develop a Visitor Basics Improvement Plan to ensure a safe, efficient and welcoming atmosphere considering infrastructure and accessibility, appearance and amenity, information provision, and quality assurance of accommodation/attractions
Action Outputs	• No. of initiatives delivered • No. of strategies/plans developed
Medium Term Outcomes	• Improved perceptions of Bolton • Increased visible policing • Reduced antisocial behaviour • Increased visitor numbers • Increased visitor spend
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased GVA • Improved quality of life • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness

Action 1c: Enhancing the food and drink offer

An improved food and drink offer in Bolton gives people reasons to visit and stay longer. Vibrant cafes, restaurants, bars, markets and food events can support inclusive growth, pride in place, and town-centre regeneration, attracting more visitors and increasing spending and supporting vitality and footfall in the borough.

Building on Existing Activity

- **Mixed use regeneration schemes** in town and district centres will stimulate footfall and business growth through the provision of town centre living and office space, increasing the demand for local restaurants, cafes and bars to capture spend and support vitality. For example, the Market Place Vaults development is providing a dining and leisure venue in the Town Centre.
- The annual **Bolton Food and Drink Festival** (BFDF) is the UK's largest food festival of its kind, drawing over half a million visitors in 2025, providing a major boost to traders, and helping to generate millions of pounds for the local economy.
- **Bolton Market** has recently undergone a £4 million improvement to create a seating and meeting area for people visiting the market for food and drink.
- A new food hall at **Westhoughton Market** is providing space for independent food start-ups and local food entrepreneurs.
- A pilot scheme for themed markets is underway as part of the **Crompton Place Meanwhile Use Strategy**.
- **The Visit Bolton Insider Handbook** includes a dedicated section on the food and drink offer across the whole borough.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	An enhanced food and drink offer can support Bolton's appeal and identity. A diverse, high-quality food offer can make town and district centres more attractive destinations, elevating the visitor experience and town centre vitality, making Bolton a more appealing destination where people stay longer and come back for more.
Approach	• Complement investment in retail, housing and transport through an attractive food and drink offer to bring new developments to life • Develop the evening economy through the provision of a quality food offer and enhanced profile as a food destination • Showcase Bolton's unique character through championing local products, food producers and Bolton Food Hall • Strengthen year-round dining options and food events, spreading the benefits across town and district centres • Leverage the success of the Bolton Food and Drink Festival to support growth in the food and drink offer of the borough • Encourage new venues through business support and pop-up activity
Targeting of activity	• Sector focus on food and drink • Town and district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, businesses, investors, developers and VCFSE sector, Marketing Manchester, Market Place, Town Councils
Next Steps <12 months	• Continue to encourage the provision of food and drink offerings as part of mixed-use developments i.e. Crompton Place, Cheadle Square, Trinity Quarter, Church Wharf and also through the refurbishment /redevelopment of No1 Newport Street and 'Meanwhile Use Strategy' for Crompton Place scheduled to be activated in 2027

Next Steps <12 months	• Extend pilot scheme for themed markets in Bolton Town Centre to support delivery of Crompton Place Meanwhile Use Strategy • Strengthen food and drink offer as part of existing and themed markets, i.e. Bolton Market, monthly Artisan Market, Westhoughton Market. This could include, for example, themed 'Foodie Friday' markets • Continue dialogue with local businesses and organisations to maximise community wealth building as part of the Bolton Food and Drink Festival • Explore dedicated section on Visit Bolton website to promote home grown businesses and products • Annual update to the Visit Bolton Insider Handbook to reflect the current food and drink offer • Complete Albert Hall café kitchen renovations to support pop up restaurant offer in the town centre and build confidence in hospitality
Action Outputs	• Floorspace created for food and drink uses as part of new mixed-use developments • Number of themed markets delivered • Number of markets enhanced to champion local products • Number of partnerships forged with local food and drink providers
Medium Term Outcomes	• Greater business/investor confidence • Investment secured £ • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Extended dwell time • Increased visitor spend • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased GVA • Jobs created • Increased business start-ups and enterprise growth

THEME 2:
Secure and Capitalise on Opportunities for Major Investment

Action 2a: Supporting major planned and proposed investment in Bolton Town Centre and across the borough

Securing and capitalising on major investment is fundamental to Bolton's visitor economy growth – helping to turn ambitious plans into reality. By attracting regeneration funding and major development, Bolton can enhance its visitor offer, boost the local economy, and build community pride. Through making the most of every investment opportunity Bolton will strengthen its appeal, increase visitor numbers and spending, and ensure that the benefits of a thriving visitor economy are felt by Bolton's businesses and communities.

Building on Existing Activity

- As part of the Greater Manchester Strategy, GMCA has committed to establishing a **Mayoral Development Corporation** (MDC) in Bolton Town Centre, aimed at accelerating regeneration activity and attracting investment. The current focus is on establishing the red line plan and key operating principles for the statutory body. The current area proposed includes 13 key development sites, with potential for 2,000 new homes, 31,000 sqm of employment space, 300 hotel beds, 14,000 sqm of food and drink venues, and more than 5,000 sqm for community and leisure use.
- The **Bolton Town Centre Masterplan** is delivering new homes, offices, hotels and leisure sites with the aim of adding 5,000 new town centre residents and creating a more vibrant, mixed-use economy. These development projects are raising the borough's profile as a place to invest in, building confidence in Bolton's growth trajectory.

- Projects such as the **Bolton Market Food Hall** and **Wellsprings Innovation Hub** add to the venues in Bolton Town Centre, profiling a changing environment for visitors and business in growth markets.
- The **Bolton Town Centre North Regeneration Project** is a flagship £250m mixed-use redevelopment focused on replacing the former **Crompton Place Shopping Centre** with up to 340 new homes, a 110-room hotel, around 80,000 sq. ft of office space, and ground-floor uses designed to support a vibrant town centre economy. A new pedestrian route connecting Victoria Square and Bradshawgate is designed to host events and pop-up markets. The project is being delivered in partnership with Federated Hermes specialist development arm MEPC. The project is supported by the £15.4m Local Regeneration Fund awarded to Bolton and is a priority project under the GMCA Good Growth Fund. Demolition of the shopping centre is scheduled to commence in summer 2026. Other key development projects in the town centre are well underway including:
  - **Moor Lane** (Phase 2) residential scheme
  - **Church Wharf** £100m mixed use development including residential, community spaces, retail and leisure and hotel accommodation (up to 130-bed)
- **NorthFold,** the major growth corridor and regeneration scheme spanning the boroughs of Wigan and Bolton, is designed to deliver 9,000-12,000 new homes, 3.6 million sq. ft of industrial space, and significant health innovation infrastructure. The initiative is underpinned by six catalyst projects including Health Innovation Bolton, Hulton Park, and Bolton Town Centre.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Securing major investment in Bolton can improve the breadth, quality and appeal of the visitor experience, so that more people choose Bolton as a place to visit, stay and enjoy. Major regeneration schemes can transform the place offer, turning under-used sites into attractions and improved public spaces.
Approach	• Effective casemaking for investment with a focus on the culture and leisure offer • Identify gaps in visitor infrastructure and develop strategies to address these • Enhance and increase visitor attractions • Develop relationships with funders and investors to raise the profile of Bolton as a compelling destination for investment
Targeting of activity	• Town and district centres • New and existing attractions • Accommodation/hospitality, leisure, retail, food and beverage sector
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Developers, investors, businesses, operators, commercial agents, MHCLG, DCMS, Marketing Manchester, Invest Manchester

Next Steps <12 months	• Advance delivery of planned investment in the borough • Identify opportunities aligned to the visitor economy to inform the development of a 10-year pipeline of projects to be supported and delivered through the proposed MDC, with delivery plans and investment plans required • Identify culture and leisure requirements through synthesis of existing strategies (Greenspace, Culture, Economic Plan, Sports and Leisure etc) and targeted research to support casemaking for investment • Undertake feasibility work as required to support effective casemaking
Action Outputs	• No. of studies/strategies developed to support growth in the visitor economy
Medium Term Outcomes	• Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy • Increased visitor numbers • Improved visitor welcome • Increased overnight stays • Extended dwell time
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased bed spaces / accommodation capacity • Jobs created • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved quality of life of residents and visitors

Action 2b: Targeted inward investment strategies

A thriving visitor economy in Bolton requires a compelling culture and leisure offer. This requires a targeted inward investment approach, addressing identified shortcomings in culture and leisure infrastructure. This will ensure that Bolton unlocks maximum benefits for the economy, enhancing attractiveness as a destination, and supporting community well-being.

Building on Existing Activity

- Regular attendance at **major investment conferences** including MIPIM and UKREiiF, promoting Bolton as a compelling investment proposition with recent emphasis on opportunities such as Crompton Place and Northfold.
- An **investor update** was delivered in November 2025 to 300 delegates at Bolton Wanderers Football Club to raise awareness of opportunities in Bolton, including Hulton Park. Coverage included raising awareness of popular visitor attractions in the borough and how culture, leisure and sport can drive regeneration activity.
- The **Ryder Cup bid** is gathering pace, with secured backing and funding from GMCA through the Good Growth Fund.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Targeted inward investment strategies can help to meet identified gaps in culture and leisure infrastructure to turn Bolton into a well-rounded destination. A key priority is to fill critical gaps in visitor infrastructure considering quality hotel and accommodation options, food and drink offer, event venues, and investment in modern cultural and leisure facilities.
Approach	• Focus on identified gaps to ensure a selective and targeted approach to securing investment in culture and leisure • Lobbying and effective case making for inward investment aligned to culture and leisure opportunities presented by the borough • Joined up communications and marketing activity supporting major planned and proposed investment
Targeting of activity	• Town and district centres • New and existing attractions • Accommodation/hospitality, leisure, retail, food and beverage sector
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Invest Manchester, Marketing Manchester, investors, developers, LVEP
Next Steps <12 months	• Ongoing investment and attendance at trade, investment and sector specific conferences • Collaborative work with Invest Manchester to raise the profile of Bolton investment opportunities on a national and global stage • Ongoing promotion of Bolton's regeneration plans and investment opportunities via specialist trade press including Place North and Insider • Regular engagement in sub-groups formed to enable key partners to make decisions on joined up branding and promotion of opportunities aligned to major investment i.e. NorthFold Strategic Communications group

Next Steps <12 months	• Develop an accommodation study and strategy to address lack of hotel accommodation which is a barrier to attracting the benefits of international events within Bolton • Continue regular investor updates aligned to opportunities supporting VE sector
Action Outputs	• No. of conferences attended • No. of dedicated events held • No. of engagements in major investment communication working groups • No. of studies/strategies developed to support growth in the visitor economy
Medium Term Outcomes	• Stronger brand profile and reputation • Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased visitor spend • Greater business/investor confidence
Longer-Term Impacts	• Jobs created • Increased GVA • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Increased bed spaces/accommodation capacity

Action 2c: Securing flagship events

Flagship events - such as major sporting events, music festivals or large-scale conferences – can support growth in the visitor economy through delivering high-impact catalysts for economic growth, destination branding, and infrastructure development. These events can attract a significant number of visitors and generate economic and social value for businesses and communities.

Building on Existing Activity

- Major events such as **IRONMAN UK** and **Bolton Food and Drink Festival** provide opportunities to showcase Bolton's visitor offer and potential investment opportunities on a national and global stage.
- Peel Retail & Leisure are bidding to host the **2035 Ryder Cup** at Hulton Park, Bolton. The bid is supported by a funding package from GMCA's **Good Growth Fund** including a new link road.
- The **Bolton International Film Festival** is held annually, celebrating films from home and abroad and amplifying emerging and established talent.
- Bolton hosts a variety of music events, with **major concerts** often held at the Toughsheet Community Stadium.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A strategic approach to securing flagship events can help Bolton to fill gaps in culture and leisure infrastructure, boost the economy, and raise the profile of Bolton as a vibrant destination. By securing major events, Bolton can enable new infrastructure and improvements that secure a lasting legacy, whilst delivering immediate benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.
Approach	• Strategically embed events within broader development strategies to ensure that temporary event exposure translates into long-term visitor growth • Raise profile among investors and event organisers of the Bolton offer • Establish strong partnerships between stakeholders to align common goals and maximise resources • Target bidding and investment, working collaboratively with VisitBritain, GM LVEP, Invest Manchester, adjacent local authorities through a proactive approach • Demonstrate economic and social impact of events to support bidding • Improve infrastructure (transport, digital, accommodation etc) to increase attraction
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres • Existing attractions/venues
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, GM LVEP/MM, Invest Manchester, VisitBritain, UK Sport, adjacent local authorities, businesses, residents, VCFSE, Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Continued relationship management with key national bodies and stakeholders working with regional partners to attract sporting events and create opportunities • Continue to work with Peel Retail and Leisure, Peel Land and Property, the GMCA and other key partners to develop a compelling Ryder Cup 2035 bid submission

Next Steps <12 months	• Active engagement in the UK Sport Conference and horizon scanning of secured national and international activity that could be leveraged to benefit Bolton • Deliver dedicated cultural programmes through key projects and events such as Creative People and Places, Put Big Light On, and Bolton Food and Drink Festival, aimed at attracting a broad and diverse audience, bringing more people into Bolton's cultural offer and strengthening engagement across the borough • Explore opportunities for hosting major music and sporting events in Bolton through maximising the presence of large-scale venues
Action Outputs	• No. of flagship event bids submitted • No. of flagship events hosted • No. of funding bids secured • Develop Bolton Event Strategy
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Increased visitor spend • More attractive and vibrant town and district centres • Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy
Longer-Term Impacts	• Stronger social capital • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Improved quality of life • Jobs created • Increased GVA

THEME 3:
Lever Active and Nature Based Tourism



Action 3a: Attractive Destinations for Active and Nature-Based Tourism

Bolton has numerous assets to lever through a strategic focus on active and nature-based tourism as a mechanism for strengthening its visitor economy and closing gaps in the leisure offer. These assets enhance the appeal of Bolton, giving the borough a distinctive niche and a more diverse year-round offer that complements cultural and urban attractions. Ensuring attractive destinations for active and nature-based tourism can also improve resident lives, promoting health, pride, and inclusive access to recreational activities.

Building on Existing Activity

- **Rock Hall** in Moses Gate Country Park, Farnworth, is undergoing a major redevelopment to transform the Grade 2 listed building back into use as a visitor centre run by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The plans include the creation of an exhibition space, flexible meeting and event spaces, café and rooftop terrace. Improvements to landscaped gardens and park will complement plans to deliver a significant nature-based visitor destination.
- Introduction of the new **Bolton Greenspace Strategy,** supporting significant investment in parks and greenspaces. The heritage and nature-based spaces are being further protected by the Fields in Trust initiative which is a scheme recently approved by Bolton Council to protect Bolton's parks and green spaces for future generations, ensuring they remain for community use, recreation, and wellbeing in perpetuity.
- The **Let's Keep Bolton Moving website** provides residents with resources to support active wellbeing, signposting to activities available in local areas of Bolton to encourage participation.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	By creating attractive destinations for walking, cycling, adventure and nature, Bolton can make the most of under-used green and heritage assets such as country parks, canals and historic estates, and capitalise on natural capital assets such as woodlands and moors, to strengthen Bolton's visitor offer.
Approach	• Develop Bolton's active and nature-based tourism offer to attract more visitors and spending • Lever Bolton's unique mix of urban and rural experiences such as the West Pennine Moors, country and urban parks to support quality of life and increased visitation • Improve walking and cycling trails and visitor facilities, including joining up to the Bee Network and collaborating with adjoining authorities
Targeting of activity	• Active and nature-based tourism infrastructure / assets
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust Support: GMCA, TfGM, Groundwork, City of Trees, Fields in Trust, Environmental Agency, Natural England, neighbouring local authorities, VCFSE sector, Active Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Leverage Bolton's distinctive offer within GM through embracing active and nature-based tourism opportunities and distinct assets • Align marketing activity to promote the active and nature-based tourism offer in Bolton, including wayfinding and curated trails • Link activity such as nature, food and culture through targeted initiatives such as outdoor cultural events, farm-to-fork dining etc. • Continue to secure match funding to deliver the redevelopment of Rock Hall. To date, funding has been secured through Pride in Place and the outcome from a bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund is imminent

Next Steps <12 months	• Implement activity plan to complement the National Lottery Heritage funded Rock Hall Revival project to support engagement during the development phase of the project • Join up walking and cycling networks into the Bee Network
Action Outputs	• No. of initiatives delivered • No. of partners collaborating • No. of products developed
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased visitor spend • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life • Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy • Improved perceptions of Bolton
Longer-Term Impacts	• Improved quality of life • Improved environmental sustainability • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging

Action 3b: Developing Shared Itineraries and Curated Stories

Joining up Bolton's assets into a coherent, easy-to-explore narrative can support visitation and inclusive growth ambitions. By packaging together attractions and experiences, Bolton can present a more compelling offer, encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more, increase their dwell time, and encourage day-trippers to become overnight stays. An inclusive approach to developing shared itineraries and curated stories can engage the community and instil local pride.

Building on Existing Activity

- The new **Visit Bolton website** includes curated journeys to aid discovery and keep visitors engaged. The website makes it easy for visitors to plan their trips through an itinerary option that allows users to save events, attractions and listings.
- The **Visit Bolton Insider's Handbook** acts as a curated guide, highlighting independent businesses, food and drink offer, and town centre attractions to create authentic local experiences.
- Funding has been agreed to create a **walking tour** with 'Let's Keep Bolton Moving' that includes historic sites, statues and cultural venues.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Leveraging curated stories, shared itineraries and local experiences can boost tourism and regeneration. Through coordinated approaches, Bolton can create a more distinctive and connected experience, raising the profile of Bolton's cultural and leisure gems through unifying stories.
Approach	• Package attractions and experiences together to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more • Turn smaller assets into a bigger draw, scaling up through new products and themed packages to create new flagship experiences from existing resources (museums, parks, markets, heritage sites, theatre etc) • Work with local people to craft narratives and curate stories to showcase Bolton's unique identity (i.e. industrial heritage, green landscapes, screen tourism, etc) • Spread footfall and spend across the borough by linking town/district centres with experiences and attractions through thematic packaging • Animate public spaces with trails and stories to make them feel safer and more welcoming • Help visitors to navigate Bolton's offer easily
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Attractions and experiences
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GM LVEP / MM, GMCA, visitor attractions/assets, Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Working with local stakeholders, identify opportunities for shared itineraries and curated stories e.g. heritage trails, walking trails, foodie routes, family adventure. etc and prioritise those for delivery in the next two years, targeting and securing resources • Continue to enhance resources such as the Visit Bolton website and the Insider Handbook with new shared itineraries and curated stories to raise profile and reach

Next Steps <12 months	• Support tailored support for local businesses (through the VEAP and other programmes) • Develop key initiatives in the Town Centre, creating a family friendly experience, increasing footfall and raising the profile of the town centre
Action Outputs	• No. of partners collaborating • No. of initiatives delivered • No. of businesses/organisations supported
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased overnight stays • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • More businesses supported
Longer-Term Impacts	• Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Increased GVA

Action 3c: Active and Creative Wellbeing

Bolton is embracing an Active and Creative Wellbeing approach – making it easy for people to be active in their daily lives in parks, streets and community spaces – in recognition of the benefits it delivers for health, town centres and the local economy. Weaving health, culture and leisure together at the place level can support prevention and participation, supporting enhanced quality of life and economic growth.

Bolton's location and wealth of green spaces and outdoor facilities provide fantastic opportunities for people to take part in physical activities. Through a strategic focus on parks, green spaces, high streets and cultural venues as hubs for walking, cycling, exercise, play and social activity, Bolton can enhance the leisure and recreation offer of the borough and ensure communities benefit from an active lifestyle.

Building on Existing Activity

- The **Let's Keep Bolton Moving** strategy, led by Public Health Bolton and Greater Manchester Moving, promotes physical activity, mental health, and healthy lifestyles.
- The new **Greenspace Strategy** seeks to integrate green spaces and outdoor facilities into the leisure and cultural offer of the borough.
- Regular events such as the free weekly **Bolton parkrun** attracts 'parkrun tourists' whilst annual events such as the **Bolton Night Run, IRONMAN UK** and the world's largest **IRONKIDS** draw significant numbers of visitors to the borough.
- Secured funding (EDRFG) to provide match to enable the build of a new Cricket Dome in partnership with Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF), the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Greater Manchester (GM) at Ladybridge School Bolton. The **Bolton Urban Cricket Centre** will support physical activity, wellbeing, education outcomes and social value.
- The **Bee Network** in Greater Manchester encourages walking and cycling in Bolton through promoting routes and investing in new infrastructure. Current schemes in development include the Westhoughton Bee Network active neighbourhood, Doffcocker to Bolton Town Centre cyclops junctions, Bolton Town Centre Phase 1 (east) crossings, Astley Bridge – Crompton Active Neighbourhood scheme, and Manchester Road active travel corridor.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A more active Bolton supports a more vibrant and prosperous Bolton. Encouraging everyday physical activity can lift footfall and trade in town and district centres, helping centres to thrive. Capitalising on the growing interest in active and wellness tourism can give visitors more reasons to choose Bolton and lengthen their stay.
Approach	• Develop appealing outdoor offerings to support active wellbeing and increased visitation • Package active wellbeing offer with food, drink and cultural highlights to enhance offer
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town/district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council /Public Health Bolton Support: Greater Manchester Moving, TfGM. Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Embed the Greenspace Strategy into the Visitor Economy Strategy and Cultural Strategy to integrate green spaces into the leisure and cultural offer • Encourage creative thinking about when and how greenspaces are used to support active wellbeing and increased visitation • Capitalise on existing active wellbeing events to increase visitation, dwell time and spend (i.e. through shared itineraries, marketing, etc) • Continued investment in walking and cycling infrastructure
Action Outputs	• Sqm / Ha of enhanced greenspace • Sqm / Ha of improved walking and cycling infrastructure • No. of initiatives delivered

Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased overnight stays • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life
Longer-Term Impacts	• Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved environmental sustainability • Increased GVA

Action 3d: Enhancing Leisure and Recreation Facilities

Bolton Council is working with leisure service provider Active Bolton to explore how leisure centres, swimming pools, fitness facilities, services and teams can better serve people and communities; supporting active lives for all, tackling health inequalities and ensuring that active wellbeing becomes an integral and valued contributor to the wider health and social care system in every neighbourhood. Bolton is also actively encouraging the use of outdoor spaces, supported by the Greenspace Strategy, to ensure these spaces are safe, protected and equally accessible for all service users.

Building on Existing Activity

- Following a robust procurement process, Bolton Council awarded the contract to operate its publicly owned leisure facilities to the charitable trust, Bolton Middlebrook Leisure Trust (BMLT), operating as **Active Bolton**. This came into effect on April 1, 2026
- Bolton Council allocated £600k to **support improvements in parks and play areas** across Bolton in 2025/26 including Moss Bank Park, Queens Park and Moses Gate Country Park
- A **regular programme of holiday activities** is in place to encourage children and young people across Bolton to make use of a wide range of free sessions and events taking place. Activities include sports, outdoor adventure sessions, forest school experiences, activities in parks, community venues and recreational facilities.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Creating and improving leisure and activity facilities can help Bolton support active lives for all, tackle health inequalities and make active wellbeing a core part of neighbourhood life. A coordinated approach across leisure centres, swimming pools, fitness facilities and outdoor spaces will improve access, increase participation and strengthen the borough's visitor and leisure offer.
Approach	• Work with Active Bolton to maximise the use of leisure centres, swimming pools, fitness facilities and services to support active wellbeing • Improve access to high-quality leisure and activity facilities for residents and visitors across the borough
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town/district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: Active Bolton, Bolton Council /Public Health Bolton Support: Greater Manchester Moving, TfGM. Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Work with Active Bolton to review how leisure centres, swimming pools, fitness facilities, services and teams can better support active lives and reduce health inequalities • Identify opportunities to improve, promote and programme leisure and activity facilities as part of Bolton's wider active wellbeing offer • Continue to embed the Greenspace Strategy to ensure outdoor spaces are safe, protected and accessible for all users • Explore opportunities to link leisure facilities, parks and outdoor spaces with curated routes, events and community activity

Action Outputs	• No. of leisure and activity facilities reviewed • No. of initiatives delivered to support active wellbeing • No. of partners collaborating to identify and deliver improvements
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased participation in leisure, sport and physical activity • Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life • Improved access to quality leisure and recreation provision
Longer-Term Impacts	• Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved health and wellbeing

THEME 4:
Enhance the Cultural Offer and Events Strategy

Action 4a: Widening Participation

Bolton is committed to widening participation in culture and leisure – making sure that every community can join in and benefit. This will ensure that growth benefits all residents, reduces inequality, and fosters a diverse, inclusive community.

Building on Existing Activity

- Bolton's **Cultural Compact** is a partnership aimed at shaping the town's cultural future, driving regeneration, and strengthening communities. This is aligned with the **Bolton Cultural Strategy.** A key focus is on the promotion of inclusivity, improving access to culture, and supporting the creative sector. Key priorities include integrating culture into regeneration, supporting the visitor economy, and driving the 'Live Well' agenda.
- **Events Strategy** sets out the ambition to curate a dynamic, year-round programme of distinctive, high-quality and inclusive events that celebrate Bolton's identity, increase footfall and visitor spend, support local businesses, and strengthen Bolton's profile as a cultural, sporting and visitor destination.

- The **Creative People and Places** (CPP) £1 million Bolton project including funding from Arts Council England to celebrate local culture through arts, music, dance, and comedy, in collaboration with the Octagon Theatre and local community groups. Year 1 of a three-year programme began in April 2026.
- Bolton's cultural ecosystem has been strengthened through direct investment in local talent, organisations and communities. This includes the establishment of the **Bolton Creative Health Network**, investment in **Cultural Education Partnership** projects, culture grant awards to support grassroots creativity, and artist bursaries provided to nurture local practitioners.
- There has been a number of **pop-up culture events** delivered, for example within the Community Hub at Farnworth Green targeting children and young people and a mass participatory artwork show.
- Secured **headline events** by Bolton born celebrities such as comedian Peter Kay, who will deliver four shows at Albert Halls to support Bolton Hospice, with tickets strictly limited to residents with a Bolton (BL) postcode.
- Small grants programme awarded 29 grants to local organisations to deliver cultural activities such as festivals, exhibitions, and workshops.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A focus on widening participation through an accessible and appealing culture and leisure offer can boost local pride, enhance mental wellbeing, reduce isolation, build social connections, increase skills and employment opportunities, activate underused spaces, and energise town and district centres.
Approach	• Maximise culture and leisure assets to deliver culture and leisure opportunities across the borough • Engage more residents in culture and leisure to support participation, vitality and cohesion • Build a broad local audience base to support utilisation and participation of culture and leisure assets • Use everyday spaces creatively to deliver culture and leisure opportunities (pop-up performances on high streets, open-mic nights in library etc) through a focus on meanwhile activity • Animate under-used venues and public spaces • Inspire young people and diverse groups to engage, gain skills and confidence
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, VCFSE sector, visitor attractions and events, Bolton LVEP, Youth Council
Next Steps <12 months	• Ongoing work to widen participation through leveraging venues and events, utilising a variety of spaces such as Cheadle Gardens, Elizabeth Park, Octagon, Bolton Library, Bolton Museum, The Albert Halls and delivering programmes of activity in collaboration with local community groups • Maximise the inclusive growth and legacy benefits of high-profile events such as the Peter Kay shows being delivered in July 2026, IRONKIDS event as part of IRONMAN UK, etc.

Next Steps <12 months	• Roll out cultural education projects through the Bolton Cultural Education Partnership • Develop cultural offerings for target groups, e.g. young people's activities at the annual Bolton Food and Drink Festival • Continuing to build a family friendly portfolio, e.g. Sharing Stories, a project using storytelling to bring families and communities together in venues • Recruit Director and Independent Chair for Creative People and Places project and progress this initiative forward
Action Outputs	• No. of events delivered • No. of partners collaborating • No. of residents engaged • No. of young people engaged
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased volunteering • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • Enhanced skills development • Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life • Reduced antisocial behaviour • Growing audiences and creative talent • Improved perceptions of Bolton
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased GVA • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Stronger social capital • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Improved quality of life for residents and visitors

Action 4b: Bolton Events Strategy

A coordinated Bolton Events Strategy can leverage the power of events to fill gaps in culture and leisure provision, whilst boosting the local economy and town centre vibrancy. A well-planned events programme brings culture and entertainment directly into town and district centres and outdoor spaces, animating under-used venues and public areas, creating lively streets whilst raising the profile of Bolton as a visitor destination and building local pride.

Building on Existing Activity

- **Bolton Food and Drink Festival,** now in its 21st year and nationally acclaimed, draws over 500,000 visitors and contributes millions to the Bolton economy.
- The **Culture Small Grants Programme** is enabling local organisations to deliver more activity across the borough. This includes new events such as Put Big Light On and Bolton Gala.
- Investment in **Event Infrastructure Kit,** supporting delivery of events which would have otherwise not have been able to proceed due to the high cost of external hire. This has facilitated improved community engagement, strengthened partnership working, increased visibility for local organisations and enhanced event delivery.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A broad, year-round mix of markets, festivals, sports and arts events provides rich experiences for residents and visitors. An Events Strategy supports vitality and growth, coordination and inclusivity, fostering local pride and community cohesion. It can also support meanwhile activity during periods of redevelopment, testing demand for the future, helping to de-risk and shape longer-term investments.
Approach	• Develop and maintain an annual, shared calendar of events • Distribute events across the borough and invite participation from diverse groups • Celebrate local heritage and creativity • Secure and deliver flagship events • Build local audience and volunteer skills, supporting and strengthening cultural organisations and the VCFSE sector • Raise the profile of Bolton and demonstrate capacity to deliver
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres • Venues • Outdoor spaces
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Cultural organisations, Marketing Manchester, VCFSE sector, investors/developers, Bolton LVEP, businesses
Next Steps <12 months	• Development of a comprehensive Events Strategy to complement delivery of the Cultural Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy • Continue to assess the socio-economic impact of major events to support casemaking and maximise legacy benefits for Bolton residents and businesses • Build capacity through training and CPD into third sector to enable delivery • Continuous dialogue and relationship with GM via Marketing Manchester to profile Bolton's attributes and venues for major events • Deliver a range of activity through the Bolton Culture Grant to support events such as Put Big Light On, Early Doors music events and cultural education activity

Next Steps <12 months	• Continued investment in Light Up Bolton, including illumination of landmarks/ heritage sites to provide catalysts for the night time economy • Expand the Put Big Light On Festival to include the proposed Crompton Place meanwhile use offer • Deliver Early Doors, an early evening music programme to be delivered over three years (2026-2029), in partnership with GMCA • Implement the planned upgrade of the Victoria Square speaker system, enabling improved communication and enhanced safety for events to keep visitors and residents informed • Continued investment in events infrastructure to continue support for third-party events and enable community groups to deliver localised events that reflect the borough's heritage and diversity • Deliver pop up events, such as Pop Up Theatre Elizabeth Park, encouraging use of the park and attracting visitors and residents to the town centre
Action Outputs	• Bolton Events Strategy developed • No. of events delivered • No. of partners collaborating • No. of initiatives delivered
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy • More attractive and vibrant town and district centres • Increased volunteering • Stronger brand profile and reputation
Longer-Term Impacts	• Jobs created • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Stronger social capital • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Improved quality of life • Increased GVA

Action 4c: Bolton Shared Intelligence and Marketing Platform

A shared intelligence and marketing platform will unite all visitor information and promotion in one place, creating a coherent, joined-up offer for visitors making Bolton's attractions, events and experiences easy to find, book and enjoy.

Building on Existing Activity

- The new **Visit Bolton website** provides a marketing platform to showcase Bolton's unique attractions, support local organisations, and enhance the visitor experience for residents and tourists.
- The **Visit Bolton Insider Handbook** strengthens Bolton's reputation as an attractive visitor destination, showcasing local assets such as museums, parks, leisure facilities, and food and drink offerings.
- A **comprehensive evidence base** informed the development of the Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy and the aligned Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy, informing strategic priorities and action planning.
- The continued partnership with **Marketing Manchester** on key projects such as the Visitor Economy Accelerator Programme are enhancing Bolton's reputation on a wider scale, helping to place the town as a destination of choice.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A Shared Intelligence and Marketing Platform can help Bolton to reach targeted audiences and present a more coherent offer. Pursuing a data-driven approach can improve local, cultural and digital marketing, helping to position Bolton as a key cultural destination. A coordinated approach to scheduling and marketing activity can help to improve the customer experience and provide a louder, unified voice in promoting the borough.
Approach	• Bring together cultural activity and offer on a single platform to help people discover what's on and book experiences in Bolton • Guide a coordinated programme with an aligned shared calendar and brand narrative • Ensure diverse offerings are promoted under a consistent Bolton identity • Improve the customer journey through clear information and seamless booking • Coordinate schedules to reduce event clashes • Collaborate on ticketing and packaged opportunities • Align marketing activity to strengthen Bolton's profile and brand • Use data and insights to inform evidence-led decision-making
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Cultural venue and event operators
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GM LVEP/MM, cultural venues, event operators, attractions, accommodation providers, Bolton LVEP

Next Steps <12 months	• Continue to explore options for data and intelligence sharing to inform strategic plans and foster partnership working • Continue to enhance the Visit Bolton website and Insider Handbook with visitor information • Track audience interest, bookings and footfalls across the borough's events and venues to see what is working and identify demand patterns and gaps • Establish an online function for box office sales
Action Outputs	• No. of partners collaborating
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Extended dwell time • Increased ticket sales across cultural venues
Longer-Term Impacts	• Improved data collection on audience preferences

THEME 5:
Grow Visitor Products and Markets



Action 5a: Develop itineraries and packages

The development of visitor itineraries and packages will enable Bolton to join up its attractions into easy, appealing journeys – helping visitors plan more to do, stay longer, and spend more in the borough.

Building on Existing Activity

- Bolton is home to a number of Greater Manchester's **most visited attractions** including Bolton Museum (10th in GM), Bolton Aquarium (11th) and Smithhills Hall (22nd). Inclusion of these attractions on the Visit Bolton website has helped to boost profile and visitation. Between August 2024-August 2025 there has been a 16% increase in visitors to the Bolton Museum and 8% increase to Smithills Hall.
- The **Bolton Visitor Insider Guide** was launched in October 2025, profiling over 95 businesses attractions and made available via digital and print channels. Over 5,000 copies of enhanced visitor information have been distributed across venues such as Manchester Visitor Information Centre, Bolton Interchange, cultural venues, local libraries, hotels and attractions, key hospitality and shopping locations etc.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Bundling together cultural, leisure, heritage, green space and events assets into coherent themed itineraries (e.g. Bolton Highlights, Food & Drink Trail etc) makes Bolton's offer easy to discover and navigate. This will encourage day-trippers to become overnight visitors, boost their dwell time and local spend, and create more compelling reasons to choose Bolton over other destinations.
Approach	• Ensure town and district centre businesses benefit, routing people through high streets, hospitality venues and local attractions • Present a unified story of Bolton's strengths to improve Bolton's competitiveness and give visitors clear reasons to stay longer and return again • Tailor packages/stories to different interests, helping Bolton to diversify into new markets and seasons, attract niche and emerging visitor markets e.g. outdoor adventure weekend for active/nature tourists, cultural heritage trail for history buffs, or curated 'Bolton on Screen' tour for film location enthusiasts. Consider seasonal itineraries such as winter festivals or springtime tours, helping to spread visitor activity year-round • Foster collaboration through encouraging partnerships between attractions, accommodation, transport and restaurants • Encourage inclusive growth through community involvement, using local heritage and community stories to weave into the offer
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres • Hospitality venues and local attractions
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Attractions, venues, hotels, food and drink businesses, GM LVEP/MM, travel trade, Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton, local interest voluntary groups, Bolton Film Office

Next Steps <12 months	• Facilitate business networking and initiative planning to identify itinerary/package opportunities, market products for cross-promotion, and partners willing to collaborate • Develop and implement social media content strategy aligned to content in the Visitor Insider Guide, including undertaking filming • Advance the next edition of Bolton Visitor Insider Guide to showcase itineraries and packages • Enhance Visit Bolton's website and wider channels with curated journeys • Work with the travel trade to widely promote the offer, including encouraging coach tours and interest groups • Embed activity into a shared marketing plan
Action Outputs	• No. of partners collaborating • No. of cross-promotion opportunities delivered • No. of products developed
Medium Term Outcomes	• Enhanced partnership working • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • Increased visitor numbers • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Extended dwell time • Increased overnight stays
Longer-Term Impacts	• Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Stronger social capital • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Improved quality of life for residents and visitors • Increased GVA

Action 5b: Test Feasibility in Opportunity Areas

Actively testing the feasibility of new visitor markets – such as business tourism, educational tourism, music tourism, screen tourism – alongside enabling infrastructure such as accommodation – will ensure that Bolton focuses efforts proactively on the strongest opportunities for sustained growth in the visitor economy.

Building on Existing Activity

- Launch of the **GM Screen Production Fund,** with an initial £10.5m set aside to back film and TV projects through GM towns and cities.
- Supporting delivery of the **GM Creative Industries Sector Development Plan,** with a clear ambition to make Greater Manchester the strongest screen industry cluster outside London by 2028, by creating financial incentives to make film and TV in our city region. This leverages the £25m Creative Industries Growth funding award GM received from DCMS.
- The **Bolton Film Office** was launched at the Bolton Film Festival 2025. Since October 2025 the Bolton Film Office has gained traction, promoting its offer and Bolton locations, recording over 140 filming enquiries, 29 production recess, 68 shoot days. The Early Doors live music project is underway, supported by Arts Council England, bringing regular early evening live music into Bolton through pop up events. The project aims to boost footfall for local venues, strengthen the creative economy, and encourage people to reconnect with their communities.
- New venues (e.g. Headspace) are supporting wider hospitality offer in the town centre.
- Utilising key assets such as the **Toughsheet Community Stadium** to host larger scale music events.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A greater understanding of demand can shape visitor products and identify the best opportunities to enable Bolton to build a broader, year-round visitor offer, diversify visitor appeal, and focus energy and resources.
Approach	• Evaluate demand, supply and market gaps to help prioritise promising growth areas • Maximise Bolton's assets and unique selling points and showcase Bolton's culture and communities • Provide solid evidence to guide future developments and strategic direction, providing clear insight into what visitors and businesses actually need and want • Identify economic and social impact through testing viability • Make informed decisions to deliver maximum impact • Ensure new developments in opportunity areas align with long-term infrastructure and strategic goals • Pilot initiatives to test feasibility • Make a robust case to investors and partners for emerging projects • De-risk public and private investments in visitor infrastructure
Targeting of activity	• Sub-sectors of interest • Borough-wide
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, venues/attractions, artists/creatives, VCFSE, Bolton LVEP, BWFC, Bolton Film Office
Next Steps <12 months	• Further integration of Bolton Film Office activity with broader arts and culture programmes, championing talent through partnerships with Bolton College, the University of Greater Manchester, and initiatives such as the Saturday Club

Next Steps <12 months	• Develop a Music Plan for Bolton in partnership with GMCA • Continue to grow the Early Doors project, supporting more venues with regular programming and pop-up events, aimed at energising the local cultural scene and bring new audiences into the heart of the town • Develop plans to maximise the availability of Creative People and Places funding to support town centre regeneration and meanwhile uses, including events, exhibitions and civic programmes • Maximise profile of Bolton as a film location (i.e. Peaky Blinders, It's a Sin, Coronation St, Alma's Not Normal, Bolton Wanderers (EFL USA piece), Sky Bet Advert. Plus creation of new location video to promote the Film Office offering) to support screen tourism • Continued collaboration with GMCA to strengthen regional alignment and opportunities presented
Action Outputs	• No. of feasibility studies / plans completed • No. of pilot initiatives
Medium Term Outcomes	• Enhanced partnership working • Greater business/investor confidence • Increased investment secured (public and private)
Longer-Term Impacts	• Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Increased GVA • Increased jobs • Improved skills • Improved quality of life for residents and visitors

THEME 6:
Invest in Enabling Activity



Action 6a: Creating Strong Foundations

Establishing strong partnerships, governance and communications structures is vital to unlock the full potential of Bolton's visitor economy. Building coordinated leadership and clear accountability across all stakeholders gives the Visitor Economy Strategy the robust foundation it needs to succeed. Joining up marketing and branding structures help to present Bolton's story with one strong voice.

Building on Existing Activity

- **Bolton Economic Alliance** was established in January 2025, bringing together representatives of the Council, University of Greater Manchester and our Business Community, representing a wide range of sectors including construction and development, manufacturing and engineering, retail, tech industry and software, wholesale and distribution, leisure and evening economy, financial services, legal services and other professional sectors. The Alliance promotes and discusses the positive aspects of doing business in Bolton and delivering on the strategic ambitions and opportunities presented by the borough.
- The **Internal Place-Shaping Board** is a key governance group within Bolton Council, designed to lead the borough's regeneration strategy and coordinate development projects. The board acts as an internal, strategic group, aligning council departments with the broader 'Bolton Vision 2040' and driving the 'place-shaping' agenda to improve capabilities within the council and the borough's environment.
- The **Bolton Town Centre Board** was established as a 'Town Deal Board' to oversee funding and specific regeneration and development projects within the town centre.
- The **Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership** (VEP) brings together the Council, local businesses, cultural and education leaders, Marketing Manchester and third-sector representatives.
- Active participation in the **Greater Manchester Local Visitor Economy Partnership** (LVEP), with senior officer attendance.
- The Brand Bolton initiative was launched in 2025 and is overseen by a **Brand Bolton Board**, a Place Brand Manager and an ambassador network.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Strong governance, partnerships and communication structures underpin the creation of a resilient and adaptable visitor economy through coordinated activity and intent.
Approach	• Structured governance frameworks including regular partnership meetings, annual progress reviews, and links to city-region bodies will ensure efforts are well-coordinated and strategically guided, helping to reduce duplication, speed up decision-making, and keep everyone accountable • Build confidence for investors, key bodies, funders and event organisers through clear leadership, effective collaboration and a shared vision • Shared marketing and communications framework to provide consistent, compelling place messaging and activity • Through the place brand, provide a unifying narrative and visuals to positively influence perceptions and image of Bolton, embedding this into policies, marketing and communications
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: Marketing Manchester, anchor institutions, private sector, Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton
Next Steps <12 months	• Continue to build local capacity and skills i.e. growing the 'We are Bolton' ambassador network • Reconvene the Town Centre Board with refreshed membership and Chairperson • Continue to align marketing efforts • Continue to strengthen partnerships between the public, private and VCFSE sectors to support inclusivity and ownership of the VES

Next Steps <12 months	• Secure greater collaboration with Greater Manchester and national tourism bodies through the LVEP to tap into regional opportunities and expertise • Continued evolution of a shared digital platform / marketing calendar to support coordination of events and campaigns
Action Outputs	• No. of partnership meetings/events held • No. of ambassadors
Medium Term Outcomes	• Enhanced partnership structures • Greater business/investor confidence
Longer-Term Impacts	• Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved reputation across sector areas

Action 6b: Enhanced Image and Perception

A positive image and perception of Bolton is vital to growing the visitor economy, encouraging more people to visit, invest and return to Bolton. Showcasing Bolton as a thriving, welcoming place filled with character and opportunity will encourage people to visit, return and invest.

Building on Existing Activity

- Ambitious regeneration plans are driving major transformation aligned to the 2040 vision for Bolton, including town centre redevelopment such as the £250m plans for Crompton Place, and cultural and civic enhancements.
- Continuous development of **Brand Bolton,** with a **Place Brand Manager** in post, regular board meetings held with the **Brand Bolton Board,** and activity including establishment of key networks and delivery of regular **Bolton Ambassador Breakfasts**. Focused activities have included an arts and culture in Bolton session and separate hospitality event, showcasing events, initiatives, programmes, projects and venues to attract visitors to the borough.
- **Improvement of public spaces** in Bolton Town Centre to enhance the safety and visitor experience for local communities. This has included the introduction of new town centre wayfinding, upgraded lighting featuring new totems, and strengthened safety measures with the installation of five new defibrillators and nine CCTV cameras.
- **Wrapping of empty units** at Topp Way and former M&S site helps to improve perception and image.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	An enhanced image of Bolton will facilitate stronger confidence and greater opportunities in the visitor economy, supporting repeat visitation, dwell time and spend.
Approach	• Promote Bolton's strengths through the Brand Bolton narrative and the Visit Bolton platform • Utilise cultural programmes, events and physical investments to showcase Bolton's offer • Support inward investment and major event bids • Amplify Bolton's image on bigger regional and national stages
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GM LVEP / MM, VisitBritain, investors, developers, attractions, DCMS
Next Steps <12 months	• Proactively work with the LVEP, Marketing Manchester and VisitBritain to boost visibility and credibility • Widely publicise and celebrate new and aligned investments to the visitor economy • Work with individual attractions and investments to support a cohesive, attractive destination • Grow the ambassador network • Continue to lobby and secure investments that improve public realm, gateways, safety and security
Action Outputs	• No. of cross-promotion opportunities delivered • No. of initiatives delivered

Medium Term Outcomes	• Stronger brand profile and reputation • Improved perceptions of Bolton • Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy • Greater business/investor confidence • Increased visitor numbers • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Extended dwell time
Longer-Term Impacts	• Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Civic pride, community spirit and sense of belonging • Increased GVA

Action 6c: Better connected, integrated and sustainable transport

A more integrated and sustainable transport network providing seamless, multi-modal journeys can enhance local and regional connectivity, making it easier for visitors to access Bolton and move around the borough.

Building on Existing Activity

- Bolton is part of the **Greater Manchester Bee Network** which provides a joined-up transport network for the city region. To date, this includes bus and tram services. Further work is underway to bring local rail routes into the Bee Network. Manchester Good Growth Fund has allocated £69.8 million for the **Park Avenue link road** in Bolton, the first phase of the wider c.18km M61-M6 North Fold east-west link road, including segregated active travel routes and bus infrastructure to support major mixed use development. This will unlock 4,000 new homes, 25,000 sqm of employment space and 1,250 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Enhanced **walking and cycling routes** delivered, e.g. between Bolton Town Centre and Bolton Royal Hospital.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Bolton's visitor economy needs a transport network that is easy to navigate, affordable and green. Good connections by road, rail, bus and active travel will reduce barriers for visitors, enabling them to arrive smoothly, navigate seamlessly, and explore the borough with ease.
Approach	• Provide a balance of travel modes to and within town and district centres • Integrate transport with regeneration and place-making • Develop a robust network of walking, cycling and wheeling routes across the borough • Create and maintain safe and coherent walking and cycle routes to town and district centres • Continue to improve bus and rail frequency and reliability • Provide parking aligned to visitor demand in key locations • Ensure EV charging points are available and accessible • Support major events through enhanced and high-capacity transport / parking provision • Seek major investment to enhance regional and national transport links
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres
Partners of Interest	Lead: TfGM, Bolton Council Support: Local operators, Sustrans, Bolton LVEP, Brand Bolton

Next Steps <12 months	• Deliver additional walking and cycling routes in line with proposals i.e. Bolton Town Centre East, Farnworth Streets for All, Topp Way/Higher Bridge Street, Bolton Town Centre to Doffcocker • Develop a Bolton Borough Walking and Cycling Network Plan to provide an evidence based, coordinated approach to network development, and provide a programme of active travel schemes to secure investment in Bolton and contribute to the developing Greater Manchester Bee Network • Continue implementation of the Bolton Local Transport Implementation Plan, including integration of public transport provision into the Greater Manchester Bee Network, including local train services. • Continue to invest in better wayfinding and ensure this aligns with shared itineraries
Action Outputs	• Square metres of improved walking and cycling infrastructure • No. of initiatives delivered
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Increased footfall in town and district centres • Spreading the benefits of the visitor economy across the borough • Improved visitor welcome • Investment secured £ supporting growth in the visitor economy
Longer-Term Impacts	• Improved quality of life • Improved environmental sustainability

Action 6d: Targeted Business Support

Targeted business support is a critical foundation for delivery. It enables local businesses to grow, collaborate and innovate, ensuring Bolton's visitor economy is high quality, inclusive and investment ready. By strengthening the businesses that deliver the visitor experience every day, Bolton can maximise the impact of its wider investments, events and place making activity – and secure sustainable, long term growth.

Building on Existing Activity

- **Visit Bolton** delivers business support, marketing and engagement through thematic campaigns, product promotion, events, long-term project activity, product development, web and social media content, and the production of visitor collateral. The Visit Bolton website currently hosts 326 local tourism and hospitality businesses and has significant city region reach. The website has evolved to include venue profiles and events.
- The **Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Accelerator Programme** has engaged regularly with local hospitality, attraction and accommodation providers, offering training and development support. As of April 2026, 99 attendees from 23 SMEs have engaged across eight sessions.
- GM Business Growth Hub's **Spark to Scale** programme (partnered with Wigan & Bury) started in January 2026 and is delivering an accelerated six-week programme for sector businesses designed to propel ambitious businesses forward.
- The **Bolton Culture Grants** programme, designed to build capacity into the cultural sector and with an emphasis on delivery in town and district centres.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	Targeted business support is essential to building a strong, resilient and competitive visitor economy in Bolton. It acts as a key enabler across the strategy, helping to strengthen town and district centres, helping businesses to benefit from major investment and events, enhancing the cultural and events offer, and supporting the development of new visitor products and markets.
Approach	• Support skills development and digital adoption to enable businesses to meet evolving visitor expectations, improve customer experience and diversify their income • Ensure local businesses are ready to capitalise on major investment/event opportunities through building capacity, readiness and collaboration • Encourage collaboration through partnership working and collective promotion to create a more integrated and competitive destination offer and maximise footfall and spend • Facilitate enterprise and innovation through raising awareness of the opportunities presented for new visitor experiences, itineraries and packages, encouraging businesses to diversify into new and emerging markets that support growth in the visitor economy • Support stronger town and district centres through a diverse offer
Targeting of activity	• Borough-wide • Town and district centres • SMEs with scale up/growth potential
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, GM LVEP / MM, businesses/intermediaries, investors, Bolton LVEP, Business Bolton, Invest Manchester -Growth Hub
Next Steps <12 months	• Establish the After Hours Forum in Bolton, building on the approach in Manchester, to support hospitality businesses within the night-time economy to build resilience, adapt to change and thrive

Next Steps <12 months	• Continue to develop the Visitor Economy Accelerator Programme (VEAP) in Bolton, supporting businesses with marketing intelligence and networking opportunities • Explore mechanisms for supporting businesses to adopt digital tools, sustainable practices and new business models to support the resilience and adaptability of the visitor economy sector • Encourage networking and partnership working, including connecting businesses with each other and regional partners such as Marketing Manchester and the LVEP through the Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP) • Support individuals, creative practitioners, community groups and cultural organisations to develop and deliver activity across the borough through the Bolton Small Grants Programme offering a mix of micro grants for skills and resources, small grants for project delivery, larger awards for organisational development, and capacity building grants designed to help organisations improve governance, build resilience, and develop the skills and structures needed to grow sustainably
Action Outputs	• No. of businesses / organisations supported • No. of individuals supported with skills development
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor spend • Extended dwell time • More businesses supported • Greater business/investor confidence • Investment secured (£) supporting growth in the visitor economy
Longer-Term Impacts	• Increased GVA • Increased business start-ups and enterprise growth • Jobs created • Improved skills

Action 6e: Responsive Skills System

A responsive skills system is a foundational enabler of success. It ensures Bolton's visitor economy has the talent, capacity and adaptability needed to deliver excellent visitor experiences, maximise the benefits of investment and events, and support inclusive, long term growth.

Building on Existing Activity

- Bolton **Cultural Education Partnership** is charged with delivering cultural education projects for children and young people to support participation and inclusion.
- The **Skills Executive Board** is a newly established, partner-led group in Bolton, launched to drive the skills and employment agenda within the overarching 2040 borough plan. The board aims to foster a culture where education is closely aligned with the labour market to ensure residents have the skills they need to succeed.
- The **GM Creative Industries Sector Development Plan** is supporting the development of strong local skills as part of the ambition to grow the creative economy in the region 2-Year Action Plan.

2026-2028 Action Plan

Action	Description
Rationale	A responsive skills system is critical to supporting a strong, sustainable visitor economy in Bolton because it ensures the right people, with the right skills, are in place at the right time to deliver a high quality visitor experience.
Approach	• Develop a well-aligned skills system to ensure the visitor economy can deliver high standards of service and meet increased demand through aligning training with sector needs • Ensure businesses have the capacity and capability to respond to demand, ensuring they have the leadership and management skills, digital adoption and marketing skills to diversify and grow their offer • Inspire careers within the visitor economy sector by showcasing opportunity and experience • Create accessible entry points into employment and progression pathways • Support a high quality visitor welcome through excellent customer service and communication skills • Give investors, developers and event organisers confidence in delivery in Bolton • Maximise the local economic and social impact of investment through connecting local people to opportunities generated in the sector
Targeting of activity	• Children and young people • Deprived areas • Target groups i.e. inactive/at risk of becoming inactive
Partners of Interest	Lead: Bolton Council Support: GMCA, GM Growth Hub, skills providers, CEIAG providers, businesses, VCFSE sector, Bolton LVEP

Next Steps <12 months	• Roll out more cultural education projects utilising existing funding in areas of deprivation and need • Close engagement through the Skills Executive Board and GM LVEP to explore routes/initiatives to enhancing the talent pipeline to support the visitor economy e.g. Tourism Talent Hub platform showcasing case studies and current vacancies • Explore opportunities to upskill the existing visitor economy workforce to meet business needs, working with GMCA and the Growth Hub • Consider mechanisms for connecting people, including those with barriers to work, with roles in hospitality and tourism, to address skill shortages and vacancies
Action Outputs	• No. of learners supported • No. of businesses supported
Medium Term Outcomes	• Increased visitor numbers • Extended dwell time • Increased visitor spend • Improved visitor welcome • Increased visitor satisfaction • Improved perceptions of Bolton
Longer-Term Impacts	• Raised tourism appeal and strengthened place competitiveness • Improved community cohesion and inclusive growth • Increased GVA • Increased business start-ups and enterprise growth



03

Governance and Delivery

Strategic Alignment

The Bolton Visitor Economy Strategy Delivery Plan 2026-2028 aligns with the following local and regional strategies:

Policy	Alignment and Implication for Delivery
Key Local Strategies	
Bolton 2040 Borough Plan	The Bolton 2040 Borough Plan establishes a vision of Bolton as a thriving borough, where people want to live, work, study, invest and visit. Mission three is 'Inclusive, with access to culture, leisure and visitor opportunities. **Realising Mission 3 through the provision of a range of cultural, leisure and visitor opportunities will support growth in the visitor economy whilst supporting quality of life for residents. The VES will support delivery of the 2040 target, ensuring Bolton is a national 'go to' destination for its unique culture, food and drink offer, where all residents have equitable opportunity for high quality cultural experiences.**
Bolton Economic Growth and Resilience Plan	The Growth Plan outlines how the borough can best leverage new investment to transform the physical landscape of Bolton Town Centre and district centres, supporting businesses to create new jobs and provide training opportunities for Bolton residents. The plan highlights the role of 'Brand Bolton' in promoting Bolton to existing and new businesses and investors, leveraging key assets. Priorities for investment include the diversification of the town centre, attracting new businesses to the borough and building more resilient communities. **The visitor economy plays an important role in realising the ambitions of the growth plan. It is important that the VES strategic priorities are embedded in this growth plan to strengthen the case for intervention.**

Bolton's Cultural Strategy	Bolton's cultural strategy seeks to drive visitors and footfall to the borough through culture, including championing culture-led regeneration. The VES is referenced as a key aligned document in the Cultural Strategy. The VES Delivery Plan recognises activity being delivered through Brand Bolton, the Cultural Compact, Cultural Partners Network, Creative Health Network and Cultural Education Partnership which supports delivery of key actions in the VES.
Bolton's Greenspace Strategy	The Greenspace Strategy sets out how Bolton Council will manage parks and green spaces to ensure public open spaces remain safe, protected and accessible for all residents and visitors. Greenspace can support culture and the visitor economy, health and wellbeing, amongst other things. Alignment of activity between the VES and Greenspace Strategy will ensure that public open spaces are safe, protected and accessible for all residents and visitors and that blue and green infrastructure enhancements can support growth in the visitor economy.
Bolton's Local Transport Strategy	The Local Transport Strategy sets out a strategic plan for the development of transport within Bolton. It outlines how transport will contribute to and support the long-term aspirations of the borough. It identifies ambitions for an integrated, healthy, inclusive, reliable, environmentally responsible, safe and secure, well-maintained and resilient transport network. An integrated high-quality transport network will facilitate visitation to and within the borough, providing a critical enabler of the visitor economy.
Bolton's Active Lives Strategy	Active Lives Bolton aims to inspire healthier lifestyles, promote wellness, and empower residents to live more actively. This will be facilitated through improving active environments for walking, cycling and leisure. The VES Delivery Plan focus on active and nature-based tourism can support the provision of active environments, benefiting residents and visitors alike.

Policy	Alignment and Implication for Delivery
Key Regional Strategies	
Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy	The Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy provides the strategic framework for the tourism and visitor economy sector. Aligned strategies between the Bolton and GM VES will be supported through strong relationships between Bolton and Marketing Manchester striving collectively to deliver the strategic aims: create a strong sense of place, attract major events and investment, and enhance the visitor offer and experience.
Create GM Cultural Strategy	The Cultural Strategy establishes a mission to nurture and invest in local artists, audiences, heritage assets and cultural organisations, creating the conditions for creative businesses and communities to thrive, giving residents and visitors the opportunity to learn and engage in creative and cultural activities. The VES must leverage GM activities and investment to support growth in the creative and cultural economy, a key driver and enabler of the visitor economy.
Greater Manchester 2040 Transport Strategy	The Transport Strategy sets out plans for future transport investment that will sustain, grow and transform the transport network. It establishes a target for half of all trips to be made by public transport, walking, wheeling or cycling by 2040. The VES DP will capitalise upon regional investment plans to deliver an integrated, affordable, reliable and sustainable transport system that supports sustainable economic growth and the efficient and effective movement of people.



Role of Bolton Council Leaders, Officers and Partners

Strategy, Influence & Policy

To support the wider ambitions of these strategies it is important that Bolton's Visitor Economy Delivery Plan also aligns with activity of the wider delivery plans that are focused on the visitor economy. It is therefore key that this Strategy and Delivery Plan is communicated to the relevant Council's Executive to ensure that there is a strong voice for the Visitor Economy within the Council's executive and briefings are provided into the relevant scrutiny committee. The Visitor Economy Strategy and Delivery Plan will sit within the portfolio for Bolton's Vision 2040 and relationship with GMCA economy. It will also be important to gain support from the Executive Cabinet Members responsible for the economy and culture portfolios to ensure that the Visitor Economy is aligned to Bolton's Cultural and Economy strategies.

Alignment with Wider Greater Manchester Visitor Economy Strategy

Alignment with the GM Visitor Economy Strategy will be maintained through the continued strong relationships between Bolton and Marketing Manchester including between Bolton Council's Head of Marketing and Communications at Bolton Council and the Director of Tourism at Marketing Manchester. Bolton Council is represented on the GM LVEP Board by the Director of Corporate Resources, Bolton Council, which enables input and alignment between the local and regional strategy to ensure visitor delivery plans are coordinated including visitor facing platforms.

Alignment within Bolton

Relationships with other sectors and stakeholders with a stake in the visitor economy will be key to success. The Bolton Marketing and Communications Strategy outlines key audiences including residents, investors, students and visitors and provides a consistent visual identity and a shared story for all stakeholders to increase awareness of what Bolton stands for. Alignment of Bolton's Brand Strategy, Invest in Bolton, NorthFold, Cultural Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy and the town and district masterplans is important to ensure that activity on the ground is joined up to maximise opportunities and to avoid duplication.

Delivery of the Action Plan

As the number of opportunities and actions are extensive and the delivery plan encompasses a multitude of organisations, business and sub-sectors, in order to be successful and achieve the desired outcome it needs to be embraced and delivered in partnership. The Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership will support delivery of the plan, with identified leads taking responsibility for overseeing and coordinating actions.

Governance Framework

There are a number of governance structures that steer and supports delivery of the Strategy and Delivery Plan, in partnership with key stakeholders:

- **Political Leadership & Scrutiny –** The Leader of the Council would provide overall political leadership for the Visitor Economy Strategy and ensure a productive relationship with GMCA. Reports from the Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership and Place Shaping Steering Group would be submitted to the Executive Cabinet Member for Culture.
- **Internal Place-Shaping Board –** This is an internal Council strategic group led by Director of Corporate Services and covering wider aspects of Bolton's brand assets including investment, culture and the visitor economy and ensure the Visitor Economy Strategy and Delivery Plan is aligned to the other strategies and activity, including Invest in Bolton and NorthFold.
- **Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP) –** Governance and oversight of the Strategy and Delivery Plan is provided by the Bolton Visitor Economy Partnership (VEP) which brings together Council, local businesses, cultural and education leaders, Marketing Manchester and third-sector representatives. The VEP reports into the relevant Council economy/scrutiny committee via the Internal Place Shaping Group, providing an annual update of delivery progress and impact.

Other advisory boards include:

- **The Bolton Economic Alliance** – includes representation from the leisure and visitor economy sector and providing an opportunity to discuss strategic ambitions and opportunities presented in Bolton.
- The **Bolton Town Centre Board** – provides oversight of funding and specific regeneration and development projects within the town centre.
- The **Brand Bolton Board** – provides a partnership between the private sector and Bolton Council focused on the promotion of Bolton as a place to do business, live, study, visit and invest.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Relevant missions and outcomes in Bolton's Vision 2040 will be supported by Bolton's Visitor Economy Strategy and Delivery Plan, specifically Mission 3, including:

- **An accessible culture offer that celebrates Bolton**
- **A wider range of sports and leisure opportunities**
- **A bold Bolton Story to tell**

The Delivery Plan actions and next steps set out in Section 2 have been assigned a lead with supporting partners responsible for progressing and delivering actions against outputs, outcomes and impacts. The Delivery Plan tracker will be used to monitor progress, with close attention paid to quantifying outputs and demonstrating contribution to outcomes and impacts. The use of case studies to demonstrate impact is particularly effective. Analysis of the Delivery Plan tracker, supported by stakeholder engagement, will inform the development of an annual review to be shared with stakeholders and partners and submitted to accompany update and scrutiny papers for the Internal Place Shaping Board and to the Executive and Scrutiny Committees annually.



Visitor Economy Strategy

Bolton

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