



# The 154th Open at Royal Birkdale

Update Bulletin February 2026

## Welcome and Overview

The 154th Open will return to Royal Birkdale from 12<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> July 2026. As preparations continue, February has marked an important step forward with community engagement activity progressing, and business support programmes now launching to help local organisations prepare for the opportunities ahead.

This bulletin provides an update for residents, businesses and community groups, highlighting recent engagement activity, new training and support programmes, as well as ways to get involved as activity increases ahead of the Championship.

Official Championship updates can also be found at [www.TheOpen.com](http://www.TheOpen.com)

## Community Engagement & Traffic Planning Update

The first Community Engagement Day took place in February at Southport Market and provided residents and businesses with the opportunity to speak directly with representatives from The R&A, Sefton Council and partner agencies.

With over 50 people attending, The R&A was able to share proposals for local access and how activity on Birkdale Common will be managed. The event gave residents an important opportunity to engage early and understand the timescales for the event build, which will commence in early April with the erection of grandstands.

The R&A also confirmed the high-level traffic management plan, including key park and ride locations, spectator routing, local access arrangements and operational traffic management. More detailed travel information will follow in spring once final operational arrangements are confirmed.

Weekly drop-in sessions at The Atkinson and Southport Market continue to provide ongoing opportunities for residents to ask questions and receive updates. These sessions take place on:

- **Tuesdays and Wednesdays at The Atkinson (10:00am–2:00pm)**
- **Thursdays at Southport Market (10am – 4pm).**  
(Please note that some weeks will vary due to operational requirements)

Please use the QR code for a [full listing of all venues, dates and times](#)





## **Skills & Customer Service Training – In Partnership with Southport College**

We are pleased to announce an exciting partnership with Southport College to deliver a funded Customer Service & Inspiring Leaders Programme tailored specifically to the visitor economy sector.

This free four-week course has been designed for aspiring or newly appointed customer service team leaders working within hotels, visitor attractions, travel businesses and hospitality settings. The programme focuses on leadership within customer service environments, communication and influencing skills, complaint handling and improving service standards.

Businesses are encouraged to nominate staff who would benefit from strengthening their leadership and customer experience skills ahead of The Open and the wider Southport events programme. To book a free place, businesses can contact [Employer.Partnerships@southport.ac.uk](mailto:Employer.Partnerships@southport.ac.uk) or call 01704 392874.

## **Public Information & On-Site Updates**

From the week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> February, public information boards will be installed across Birkdale Common. These will provide general information about The Open, updates on ecology works and guidance on Public Rights of Way. Several of the boards will focus specifically on ecology, including information relating to the new hitting tee at Hillside Golf Course.

Further information about any Public Rights of Way closures or diversions on Birkdale Common will be shared at the February Community Engagement event, alongside opportunities for residents to ask questions and understand how access will be managed.

## **InvestSefton ‘Open for Business’ Support**

As we move closer to the Championship, InvestSefton, Sefton Council’s Business Support and Investment service, is on hand to provide FREE support to local businesses. Support includes one to one advice alongside a programme of expert led workshops taking place in Southport, focusing on social media and next-level customer service.

Upcoming workshop dates are:

- 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> March – Social Media
- 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> April – Next Level Customer Service
- 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> May – Social Media
- 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> June – Next Level Customer Service



Sessions take place on Monday evenings (5.30pm–8pm) and Tuesday mornings (10am–12.30pm) at The Bold Hotel, Southport.

Earlier sessions have already supported over 180 local business owners, with strong feedback on the practical and commercially focused advice provided.

The programme is designed to help businesses maximise opportunities during Championship week, while also strengthening resilience and capacity ahead of increased activity during the build phase from April onwards. Please follow the [link](#) for further information.

To explore how InvestSefton can support your business, email [investsefton@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:investsefton@sefton.gov.uk) or call 0151 934 3452.

### **Business Toolkit - Register Your Interest**

The Open Business Toolkit is currently being finalised and will be published in March 2026. The toolkit will provide practical guidance covering anticipated demand patterns, staffing considerations, licensing and compliance, marketing opportunities, and operational planning during both the build phase and Championship week.

Businesses are encouraged to register their interest in receiving the toolkit by contacting [tourism@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@sefton.gov.uk). Registered businesses will receive early notification once the toolkit is released.

### **Supply Chain & Local Contract Opportunities**

Significant supply chain opportunities are now open to local businesses as preparations continue.

Absolute Taste, the official catering partner for The Open, is seeking local food, beverage and equipment suppliers to support operations between 8<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026. Requirements include the capacity to supply high volumes, compliance with food safety standards, and operational flexibility including overnight delivery capability.

Businesses interested in supplying Absolute Taste or operating concessions onsite can register via the official [supplier information form](#).

In addition, local businesses are encouraged to register with [tourism@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@sefton.gov.uk) so they can promote their services to the significant number of contractors and suppliers who will be working in Southport as the Championship build begins in April.



## Looking Ahead

From March and into April, site activity will increase as preparations move from planning into delivery.

The installation of the contractor compound will begin in March. From early April, the erection of grandstands, hospitality pavilions and large-scale marquees will commence. Most of the core event infrastructure will be in place by early May.

Throughout May, work will focus on facilities installation, utilities connections, fit-out and interior set-up of hospitality areas, catering operations and spectator facilities. Testing, commissioning and operational rehearsals will take place during June as the site transitions from construction to being Championship ready!

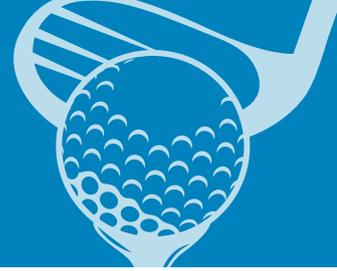
This phased approach ensures that by early July the Championship infrastructure is fully operational, allowing the focus to shift to welcoming players, spectators and media from around the world. Further updates will be issued in March, including more detailed travel information and the launch of the Business Toolkit.

## Stay Updated/Contact Information

For the latest updates and information, please use the following channels:

- Sefton Council – The 154<sup>th</sup> Open: [www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026)
- Business Support Services & Advice - [investsefton@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:investsefton@sefton.gov.uk)
- Official Championship Information: [TheOpen.com](http://TheOpen.com)
- R&A Community Enquiries: [communitysupport@theopen.com](mailto:communitysupport@theopen.com)
- Championship Enquiries (Sefton Council): [tourism@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@sefton.gov.uk)

Residents and businesses are encouraged to check the webpage regularly, as information will be updated as soon as it becomes available.



## FAQ's

### **Q. How can I ask questions or speak to someone about The Open?**

A. General enquiries can be directed to The R&A via: <https://helpcentre.theopen.com/support/tickets/new> Community enquiries can also be sent to: [communitysupport@theopen.com](mailto:communitysupport@theopen.com). In addition, The R&A's Community Support Lead will hold weekly drop-in sessions running from January, providing an accessible point of contact for local questions. The full schedule will be published shortly.

### **Q. Will local services be affected during the Championship?**

A. Some services may operate differently during the Championship period. Any changes will be communicated well in advance through this bulletin, Sefton Council's website and official social media channels. Further information will also be available at the February and May engagement events and you can also find out more at [www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026)

### **Q. How can local businesses get involved or prepare for The Open?**

A. Sefton Council and The R&A are developing a Business Toolkit to help local businesses prepare for the opportunities The Open brings. This will include guidance on training, marketing opportunities, licensing considerations and expected demand periods. Business briefing dates and sign-up details will be shared here in February 2026.

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### **Q. When will volunteering and recruitment opportunities be announced?**

A. Information on volunteering and recruitment opportunities linked to The Open will be shared once confirmed. Further details will also be posted on The R&A's official channels and shared through future bulletins.