

OUR SEFTON STORY

Sefton Visitor Economy Strategy



“ WITH STRONG LEADERSHIP AND GENUINE COLLABORATION, SEFTON’S VISITOR ECONOMY CAN BECOME ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH. ”

Tourism is one of Sefton’s greatest economic assets and is a vital force for regeneration, placemaking and investment. This strategy sets out a bold ambition to grow Sefton’s visitor economy by 30% by 2030, generating an additional £141 million in direct expenditure and supporting a more resilient, inclusive and high-quality experience for visitors and residents alike.

Already contributing £683 million to the local economy and supporting over 4,400 jobs, the visitor economy plays a pivotal role in delivering Sefton’s Economic Strategy. It drives local enterprise, attracts inward investment and underpins many of the borough’s regeneration ambitions. Sefton also plays a vital role in the Liverpool City Region’s visitor economy, not only as a destination in its own right, but as a distinctive counterpoint to Liverpool’s urban offer. Its coastal landscapes, vibrant towns and outdoor experiences provide contrast and complementarity, broadening the region’s appeal and supporting a more diverse, year-round visitor proposition.

Sefton’s strength lies in its people and its places. Anchored by Southport and 22 miles of unique coastline, the borough is home to world-renowned events like The Open and the Grand National, alongside a vibrant cultural offer exemplified by Anthony Gormley’s Another Place on Crosby Beach.

The visitor offer continues to evolve, with exciting new developments such as Salt & Tar in Bootle, the repositioning of Crosby Coastal Park, and the emerging cultural programme along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Major investments like the Marine Lake Events Centre, Maghull Health Park and Southport’s seafront regeneration will further strengthen Sefton’s appeal to both domestic and international markets.

This strategy arrives at a pivotal moment. The post-pandemic landscape presents real challenges, from reduced accommodation supply and low day visitor spend to seasonal pressures and fragile business confidence. But these are matched by significant opportunities to reposition Sefton for a new generation of visitors aligned with growing demand for wellbeing, outdoor recreation, cultural experiences and sustainable coastal breaks.

The priorities set out here are underpinned by strong strategic alignment. Locally, the strategy supports delivery of the Sefton Coast Plan, Southport Town Deal and the destination’s longstanding Classic Resort principles, alongside Bootle’s bold regeneration ambitions. Regionally, the strategy has been developed to align with the Liverpool City Region Destination Management Plan, translating its high-level ambitions on sustainability, accessibility, skills and culture into place-specific action for Sefton’s towns and coastline. At national level it aligns strongly with VisitEngland and VisitBritain’s goals to grow tourism outside London and champion sustainable travel.

Six strategic growth themes shape the strategy and define the priorities for the decade ahead. These themes are designed to stimulate demand

through targeted investment in product, experience and market positioning, while also strengthening the supply-side enablers essential to sustainable growth. They focus on harnessing the pulling power of Sefton’s world-class events, developing coherent, market-facing propositions, and improving the overall quality and competitiveness of place.

Alongside this, they embed environmental responsibility, data-led decision making and targeted business support to ensure Sefton’s visitor economy remains resilient, inclusive and innovation-led.

Our collective ambition is clear; we intend to re-establish Southport as one of the UK’s leading coastal destinations and a key ‘attract brand’ for the North West; to position the Sefton Coast as a national exemplar for sustainable, nature-based tourism; and to unlock Bootle’s creative potential as a new cultural and events gateway.

With strong leadership and genuine collaboration, Sefton’s visitor economy can become one of the most powerful tools to support inclusive economic growth, foster civic pride and enhance quality of life for our communities and stakeholders.



Cllr Marion Atkinson
Leader Sefton Council

ABOUT THIS STRATEGY



This document provides a high-level summary of Sefton's Visitor Economy Strategy (2025-2035), capturing its vision, strategic priorities and key delivery themes. It is intended as a public-facing overview to guide stakeholder engagement and support advocacy, investment and collaboration.

It also sits within the context of the Liverpool City Region Destination Management Plan, providing the place-based detail, priorities and delivery framework required to implement City Region ambitions locally.

The full strategy document includes detailed market analysis, action plans, investment priorities, governance structures and performance frameworks that inform this summary.



THE CASE FOR SEFTON'S VISITOR ECONOMY

WHAT MAKES SEFTON DIFFERENT?

Tourism is a vital pillar of Sefton's economy, generating £460 million in direct visitor spend and contributing a total economic impact of £683 million in 2024. It supports more than 4,400 full-time equivalent jobs and provides a critical source of revenue and footfall for local businesses across retail, hospitality, accommodation, events and cultural sectors.

Sefton's visitor offer is unique in the Northwest. It spans 22 miles of internationally protected coastline, award-winning beaches, heritage-rich towns and villages, world-class golf courses and an outstanding events calendar.

The borough is home to Royal Birkdale Golf Club (host of The Open 2026), Aintree Racecourse (home

of the Grand National), the Antony Gormley Another Place installation and the Southport Flower Show - all of which help shape the Liverpool City Region's wider appeal to national and international markets. Sefton's strength lies in its variety. Southport is a renowned coastal visitor destination, anchored by Lord Street and its seafront attractions, attracting leisure day visitors, short breaks and business tourism markets.

The Sefton Coast is fast becoming a destination for nature-based tourism and low impact recreation. Bootle, meanwhile, is emerging as a creative Canalside hub, shaped by major regeneration and its proximity to North Liverpool. These distinct offers are complemented by the borough's wider landscapes, from Sefton Meadows in the east to the network of villages and green spaces that trace the route of the Leeds - Liverpool Canal.

Tourism is a vital pillar of Sefton's economy...

£460M generated directly by visitor spend in 2024

£683M total economic impact in 2024

4,400 full-time equivalent jobs supported





POST-COVID CHALLENGES

Despite these strengths, Sefton’s visitor economy faces significant challenges following Covid. Total visitor volumes remain 14% below pre-pandemic levels, and while 7.93 million visits were recorded in 2023, over 90% were day visits, many from local audiences spending significantly less per head than in previous years and compared with competitor destinations. Staying visits have increased slightly, particularly in non-serviced accommodation, but the borough continues to experience low hotel occupancy, weak off-season demand and limited revenue per room night. The average day rate in Southport is just £67.79, compared with regional averages of £92-£109.

The latest 2024 STEAM volume and value outturns reinforce this picture. Performance shows a further real terms decline across both staying and day visitor markets, indicating that recovery has yet to begin. Staying visitor numbers fell by over 6%, with staying visitor days reducing by just over 11%.

Day visitors also declined from 7.13m to 6.80m, a reduction of 4.6%. Direct visitor expenditure fell to £460m, representing a 7% real terms decrease on 2023. These outturns align closely with the downward trajectory modelled in the full market assessments based on the 2023 baseline and CPI adjusted projections.

Sefton also faces intense competition. Destinations such as Blackpool, Lytham St Annes, Chester and Liverpool all sit within 60-90 minutes’ travel time and compete directly for key markets. Sefton also shares characteristics with towns like Morecambe and Harrogate, which are investing significantly in their visitor economies and developing products that respond to evolving market preferences. Visitor satisfaction in Sefton also lags behind other city region destinations. Group travel is another market where Sefton has declined. Since 2012, the loss of central coach parking, booking support and welcome services has resulted in an estimated £37.5 million in lost local expenditure. While the national market is beginning to recover, Sefton must move quickly to re-establish its offer for this high-value, low-maintenance segment, particularly during the shoulder seasons.

Tourism in Sefton is also highly seasonal. Two-thirds of visits occur between April and September, creating intense peaks and long off-season troughs that impact viability, staffing and investment. This is especially pronounced in coastal locations like Southport and Crosby, where visitor numbers drop sharply outside the summer months. Similarly, while MLEC will be transformational for Southport as a national conference destination, the business events and conference market has suffered significant erosion over the last 5 years, further compounding these structural issues.

Post-Covid Economic Challenges

Total visitor volumes down
14%

Day visitor volumes down
4.6%
from 7.13m to 6.80m

Direct visitor expenditure fell to
£460M
a 7% real terms decrease on 2023

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & THE LONGER-TERM OUTLOOK

In a competitive marketplace, the reasons for this prolonged downturn are clear. Contributory factors include leisure quality, wayfinding and access to information all fall short of modern visitor expectations. Southport’s retail core continues to decline, with Lord Street and Chapel Street struggling to attract anchor brands or offer a high-quality independent experience. Infrastructure gaps, from coach parking to wet-weather attractions and midweek experiences also reduce the borough’s competitiveness for groups, families and ‘far’ markets.

Wider forces are also shaping future demand. Leisure travel is becoming more values-driven, with growing demand for authentic, immersive experiences closer to home. Families, retirees and multi-generational groups seek flexible itineraries that blend nature, wellness, heritage and culture. Business travellers increasingly value mid-scale destinations with strong character, a good mix of accommodation and good connectivity. And for all markets, the digital journey is now paramount, with short-form content, peer reviews and real-time accessibility heavily influencing trip planning and conversion.



OPPORTUNITY & GROWTH

Yet there are clear areas of resilience. Southport's major events, including the Air Show, British Musical Fireworks and Food & Drink Festival continue to attract strong regional audiences. The forthcoming MLEC, due to open in 2029, offers a real opportunity to re-establish Sefton in the national business tourism market.

With capacity for 1,200 delegates and waterfront views, the facility could help address midweek and off-peak trade in Southport, however success depends on destination readiness, from hotel quality and town centre welcome to public realm investment, marketing and a dedicated convention bureau.

Since Covid, visitor preferences are shifting toward wellness-led, nature-based and educational experiences. Sefton's coastline, with its expansive landscapes,

nature reserves and coastal towns offers an ideal canvas to meet this demand. With targeted investment and effective visitor management, the Sefton Coast can deliver low-impact, high-quality experiences that drive spend into local amenities and coastal communities, while supporting conservation, biodiversity and year-round resilience.

Bootle is also emerging as a creative and cultural hub, driven by Canalside investment, new amenities within The Strand development, and strong links to nearby attractions such as Aintree and Liverpool Waters. Local partners are committed to shaping a community driven visitor identity rooted in the town's heritage and creative potential. Similarly, Sefton's proximity to Liverpool and direct rail connectivity creates significant opportunities to tap into wider markets, whether through joint visitor packaging or positioning the borough as an alternative base for overnight stays.



RECOGNISING POTENTIAL

Above all, Sefton's future success will depend on its ability to respond to visitor trends and close the competitiveness gap with other UK destinations. This means enhancing product quality and distinctiveness, strengthening digital capability, investing in infrastructure and delivering destination led campaigns that raise visibility in 90-minute market catchments and beyond.

SEFTON MUST ALSO CONTINUE TO REPOSITION ITS CORE DESTINATIONS:



SOUTHPORT

Southport must evolve from a traditional resort into a vibrant, year-round driven coastal destination, built around major events and conferences, culture and heritage, compelling leisure experiences and high-quality hospitality.



SEFTON COAST

The Sefton Coast has the potential to become a national exemplar for sustainable tourism, with improved access, upgraded amenities and conservation-focused interpretation. Bookended by Southport and Crosby, it offers real scope for environmentally responsible growth.



BOOTLE

Bootle can emerge as a creative and cultural gateway, building on Canalside investment, its creative communities and venues, and proximity to key demand drivers like Aintree Racecourse and Everton's Bramley-Moore Dock stadium.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Across all three, a more strategic approach to destination management is essential. This includes stronger governance, a clear leadership voice and improved coordination of public-private-community partnerships. A strengthened Destination Management Organisation (DMO) model will be key to aligning investment, championing the sector and co-ordinating the borough's visitor economy.

Sefton must also face the future with realism. Long-standing challenges including seasonality, spend, infrastructure and perception require a concerted effort to shape attractive places, not isolated projects. Skills gaps, business support needs and poor connectivity must be addressed head-on, with workforce development and business resilience forming part of a wider regeneration and inclusion strategy.

BEING BOLD

Sefton's potential is enormous. With a 90-minute catchment of over 4.5 million households, many of which are affluent, multi-generational or values-led, the borough is well placed to grow its share of day, staying and business visitors.

But it must speak with confidence, deliver with quality and think like a destination of regional and national significance.



OUR VISION FOR 2035



SEFTON'S VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY AIMS TO POSITION THE BOROUGH AS A LEADING, SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION BY SHOWCASING THE UNIQUE APPEAL OF SOUTHPORT, THE SEFTON COAST AND BOOTLE TO ATTRACT VISITORS TO THE BOROUGH. THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES, AND STAKEHOLDERS, WE WILL GROW OUR SHARE OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL VISITOR MARKETS, DRIVE REGENERATION, AND FOSTER A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT VISITOR ECONOMY THAT ENHANCES SEFTON'S IDENTITY, QUALITY OF LIFE AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY.



OUR AIMS

Together, these aims outline how we will grow Sefton's visitor economy in a way that is inclusive, sustainable and distinctive. Attracting visitors, supporting local businesses and creating places that residents are proud of.



COASTAL ICON

Elevate Southport as one of the UK's top coastal destinations and a leading attract brand in the Liverpool City Region.



HIDDEN GEM

Unlock Bootle's visitor potential, celebrating its heritage, creative identity and proximity to Liverpool's waterfront.



MARKET GROWTH

Grow Sefton's share of leisure and business visitor markets at both regional and national levels.



NATURE LED

Position the Sefton Coast as a national benchmark for sustainable, nature-based tourism.



TOGETHERNESS

Foster collective ownership, working with communities, businesses and partners to drive sustainable growth.



PLACE POWER

Use the visitor economy to support regeneration and place-making across the borough.



FUTURE PROOF

Support sustainable tourism enterprises to enhance quality, diversity and resilience.

OUR OBJECTIVES (BY 2035)

By 2035, these objectives translate our ambition into measurable outcomes. Setting clear targets for growth, recognition, investment and long-term impact across Sefton's visitor economy.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Increase annual direct visitor spend by 30%, with Southport as the leading attractor in the LCR.



YEAR-ROUND STAYS

Grow overnight stays by 25% and raise occupancy rates to 85%, reducing seasonality.



LOCAL DELIVERY

Embed tourism in local regeneration by engaging communities and stakeholders annually in delivery.



TARGET MARKETS, PROPOSITION & POSITIONING

TARGET MARKETS & AUDIENCES

Sefton's visitor economy strategy is guided by a clear understanding of where future growth will come from, and who it will come from. By aligning the right propositions with the right audiences, the borough can attract higher-spending visitors and improve year-round performance across both leisure and business markets.

This shared understanding of achievable growth markets also allows destination partners to coordinate activity, pool resources and extend marketing reach. In turn, this creates greater confidence among local

businesses to invest in quality, innovation and higher-value visitor experiences.

A 90-minute drivetime from Sefton covers a population of approximately 8.5 million, of which 4.5 million fall within key lifestyle and motivation segments that align strongly with the borough's offer. These segments have been refined through Mosaic analysis and matched to Sefton's strengths across nature, heritage, family attractions, cultural experiences, events and general recreation. Together, they represent a potential market worth more than £60 million, with a projected annual economic impact of £90 million when applying the wider tourism multiplier.

 **8.5 MILLION**
approximate total population of Sefton

 **£90 MILLION**
projected annual economic impact for Sefton when applying the wider tourism multiplier



PRIORITY LEISURE MARKETS



DAY & SHORT-BREAK VISITORS (AGED 25-65)

Particularly from 30-90 minutes away, including:

Family Adventure Seekers

Younger families looking for fun, safe, affordable days out with a mix of outdoor activities and child-friendly amenities.

Eco & Active Explorers

Gen X and older Millennials seeking active, meaningful travel with a focus on nature, wellbeing and sustainability.

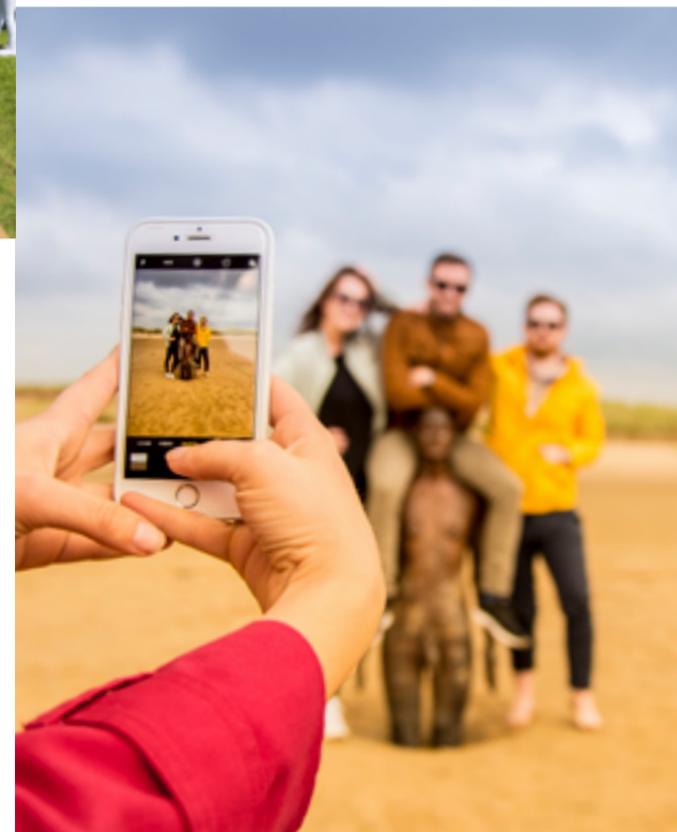
Mature Explorers

Older couples and groups seeking culture, heritage and relaxing, well-serviced coastal escapes.



VISITING FRIENDS & RELATIVES (VFR)

A consistently high-volume segment that supports both community and local economic resilience and presents opportunities to promote longer stays and repeat visits through strong local advocacy.



EXPERIENCE-LED & INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

Spontaneous Socials in the 25-35 age range, who seek unique, flexible and shareable moments. This group responds well to social-first marketing, and to festivals, food, and pop-up events.



Combined, these audiences represent a reachable and highly scalable market for Sefton, ones that value authenticity, wellbeing and connectivity over 'big brand' tourism, and whose evolving expectations align with the borough's strengths. A conservative 10% penetration of this market, equating to around 1.3 million additional visitor days annually, forms the basis of the economic growth projections set out in this strategy.

SPECIALIST LEISURE MARKETS



Golf Tourism

Sefton boasts the largest concentration of championship golf courses in England, anchored by Royal Birkdale and five other links courses forming part of England's Golf Coast.

This makes it a prime destination for high-spending golf tourists, especially from markets like North America, Germany and the Nordics.

Golf visitors typically spend over £1,400 per trip, more than double the average leisure visitor, and often travel as part of pre-booked itineraries that include accommodation, transfers and hospitality. These are sold via specialist tour operators and DMCs, with England's Golf Coast providing the main route to market.

The Open Championship in 2026 will provide a powerful springboard, but long-term growth will rely on improving product readiness, trade engagement and destination marketing.

KEY ACTIONS INCLUDE

- Developing pre-bookable golf products that combine courses with accommodation, transfers and hospitality.
- Strengthening relationships with international trade via England's Golf Coast and VisitBritain campaigns.
- Leveraging The Open 2026 to drive long-term business through hosted buyers and familiarisation visits.
- Enhancing destination welcome, accommodation and hospitality standards to match premium expectations.

£1,400
Golf Visitor's typical spend per trip

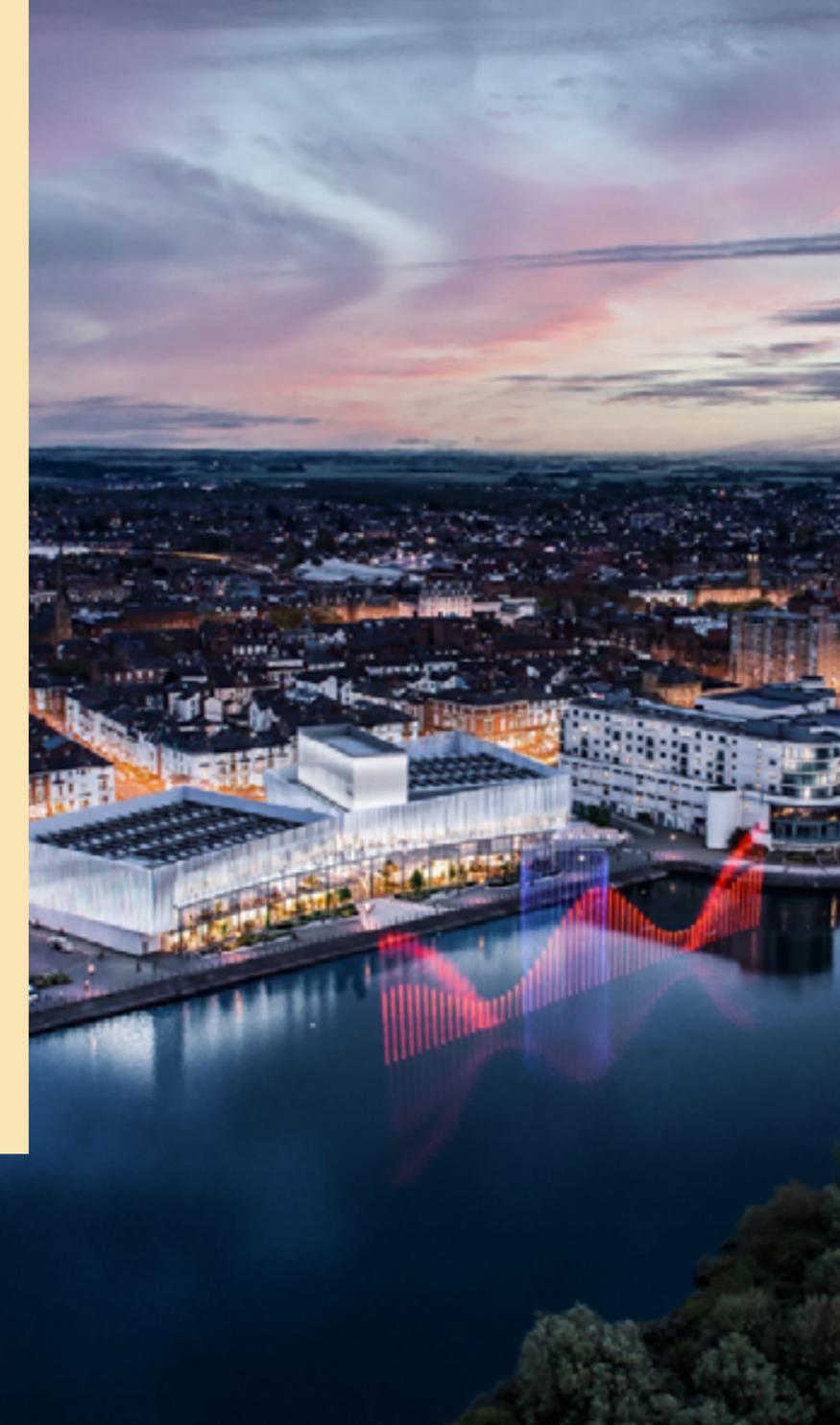
Business Events & the MICE Market

The opening of MLEC marks a step-change in Sefton's ability to attract Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) markets. The MICE sector is a high-value, year-round market that generates significantly greater spend per delegate than leisure tourism, particularly where events include overnight stays or extended itineraries.

Market growth is being driven by organisations seeking accessible, good-quality destinations that offer an attractive setting, supporting accommodation and a positive visitor experience, all of which are essential to delegate satisfaction and event success.

KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SEFTON INCLUDE

- National association and public sector conferences, especially those linked to the Liverpool City Region's strengths in health, education, digital, and clean growth.
- Incentive travel, where conference attendance is paired with leisure, cultural or hospitality experiences as part of a reward or recognition package.
- Regional and midweek corporate meetings, training events and team development programmes.
- Bleisure travel (business + leisure), where attendees extend their visit for personal travel or bring family with them.
- Smaller exhibitions and trade shows, particularly those aligned to regional industries or consumer sectors.





PROPOSITION & POSITIONING

In a competitive visitor landscape, destinations that perform strongly are those that lead with a clear, compelling and place-led proposition. Sefton's visitor economy is defined by variety, from the appeal of Southport and the natural beauty of the Sefton Coast to Bootle's emerging cultural identity.

To maximise impact, these assets must be brought together through clear propositions that differentiate the borough so that it resonates with priority audiences and provides a clear process for shaping how investment and marketing activity is structured.

THE NEED FOR A DEFINED PROPOSITION IS UNDERPINNED BY THREE KEY DRIVERS:

- **Changing visitor expectations** – People increasingly seek value-led experiences that are authentic, local, and connected to nature, wellbeing, culture and sustainability.
- **Competitive positioning** – Sefton must compete for attention, spend and loyalty within a crowded regional and national market. Distinctiveness matters.
- **Effective delivery** – A strong proposition ensures Sefton's destinations, businesses and communities are aligned behind a shared narrative, strengthening impact and return on investment. Industries or consumer sectors.

Informed by 2024 visitor research and stakeholder insight, Sefton's visitor proposition is built around themes that are grouped into quality of place, signature experiences, sustainability, accessibility and culture.

They are also supported by the proposition driver and proof points that, with investment, highlight the quality, distinctiveness and potential of Sefton's core offer.

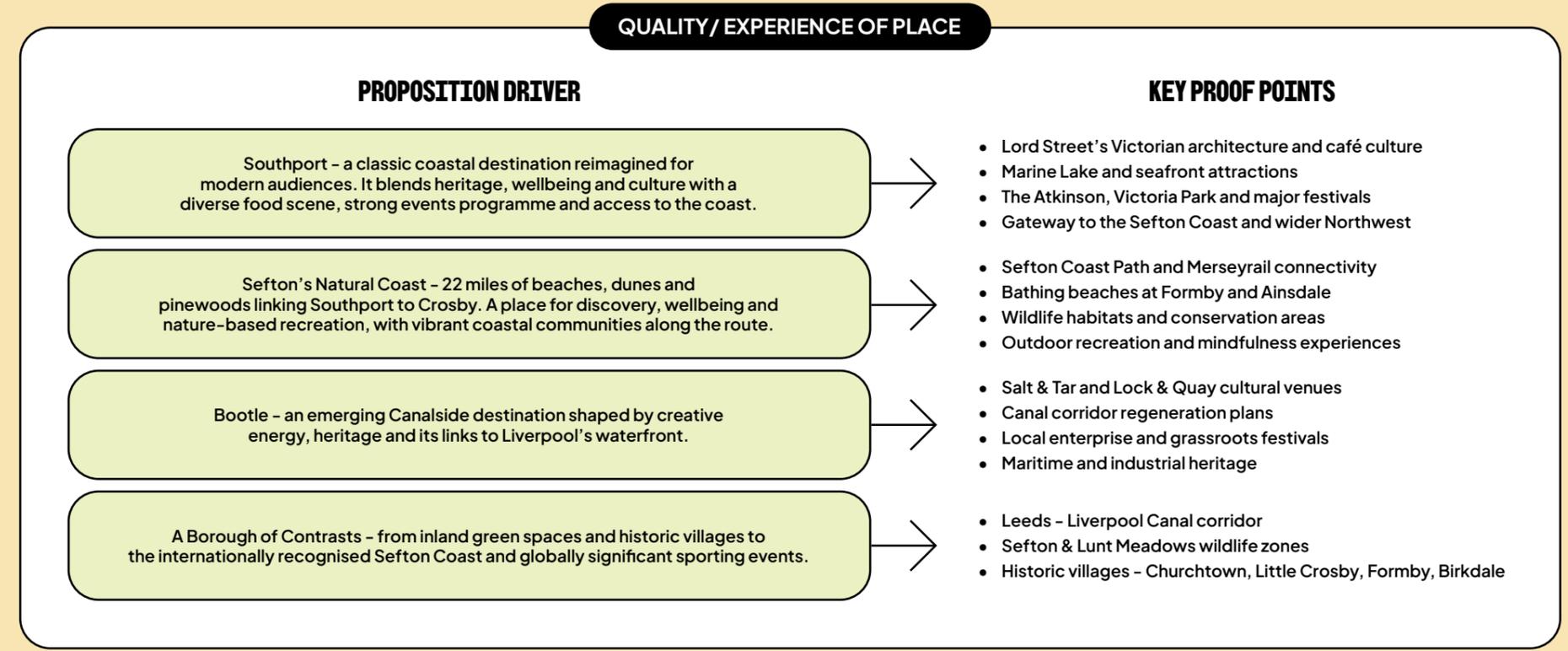
PROPOSITION

The proposition drivers highlight the diversity of Sefton's visitor experiences, from heritage, leisure and culture to nature, recreation and wellbeing.

They demonstrate that the borough's strengths are not uniform but expressed differently across its destinations. Building on this, the strategy establishes a clear approach to destination branding, ensuring that marketing, investment and visitor engagement are led by place and aligned to audience demand.

At the forefront is **Southport**, Sefton's flagship destination and attract brand, where heritage, culture, events and seafront vitality combine with a growing focus on wellness and nature. **The Sefton Coast** provides the borough's defining landscape with 22 miles of beaches, dunes and pinewoods supporting recreation, sustainability and green tourism. **Bootle**, meanwhile, is emerging as a creative Canalside destination shaped by regeneration, heritage and grassroots culture.

Together, these place brands translate Sefton's wider visitor proposition into distinctive, credible experiences that strengthen its profile and competitiveness.



SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

PROPOSITION DRIVER

England's Golfing Coast – six championship links courses, including Royal Birkdale, positioning Sefton as one of the world's premier golf destinations.

Events, Conferences & Culture – a destination known for its major events, vibrant arts scene and growing conference market.

KEY PROOF POINTS

- The Open Championship 2026
- Concentration of championship courses
- MLEC (2028) & The Atkinson
- Southport Flower Show, Air Show, Food & Drink Festival
- Another Place & Leeds – Liverpool Canal heritage

WELL CONNECTED

PROPOSITION DRIVER

Within Reach & Well Connected – easy access to Liverpool, Manchester, Chester and Cumbria, with strong local rail, road and airport links.

KEY PROOF POINTS

- M58/M57 and Merseyrail network
- Close to Liverpool and Manchester airports
- Accessible coastal gateways

SUSTAINABLE

PROPOSITION DRIVER

Sustainable & Green Destination – a circular visitor economy built on low-impact travel, local sourcing and investment in green infrastructure.

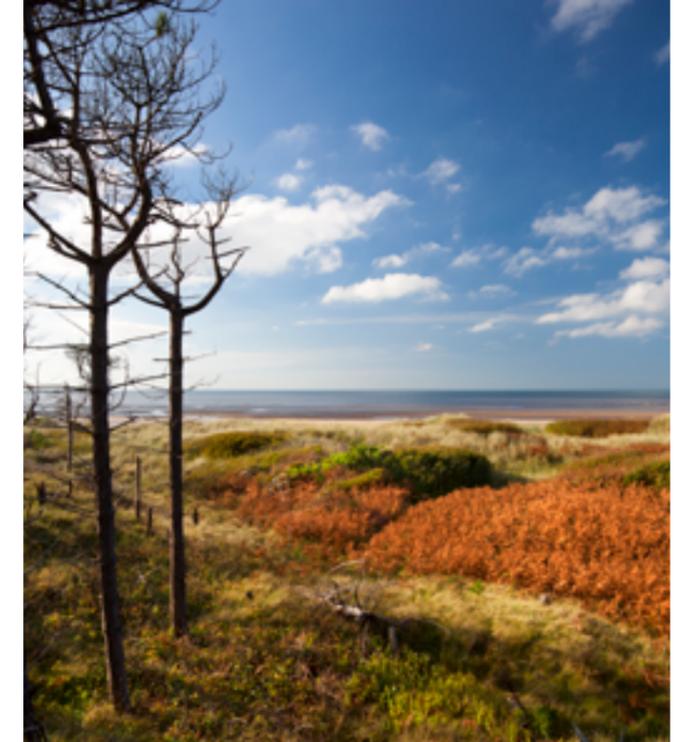
KEY PROOF POINTS

- Sustainable transport & tourism initiatives
- Local supply chains and event best practice
- Environmental stewardship across the coast

POSITIONING

Southport & The Natural Coast

Southport continues to act as Sefton's flagship attract brand, particularly for regional and national short breaks and event-driven visits. Its repositioning as Southport & the Natural Coast strengthens the town's existing appeal by aligning with the rising demand for wellness, outdoor recreation and nature-led experiences. This association also reflects Southport's role as the northern gateway to the Sefton Coast and provides a coherent platform for packaging coastal experiences, heritage, culture and hospitality into a compelling destination offer.



Canalside Bootle

Bootle is recognised as an emerging destination brand, building momentum through grassroots cultural activity, Canalside regeneration, and strategic connections to Everton's Bramley-Moore Dock stadium and Aintree Racecourse.

Canalside Bootle positions the town as an alternative creative hub, framed by a strong local identity and growing visitor infrastructure.

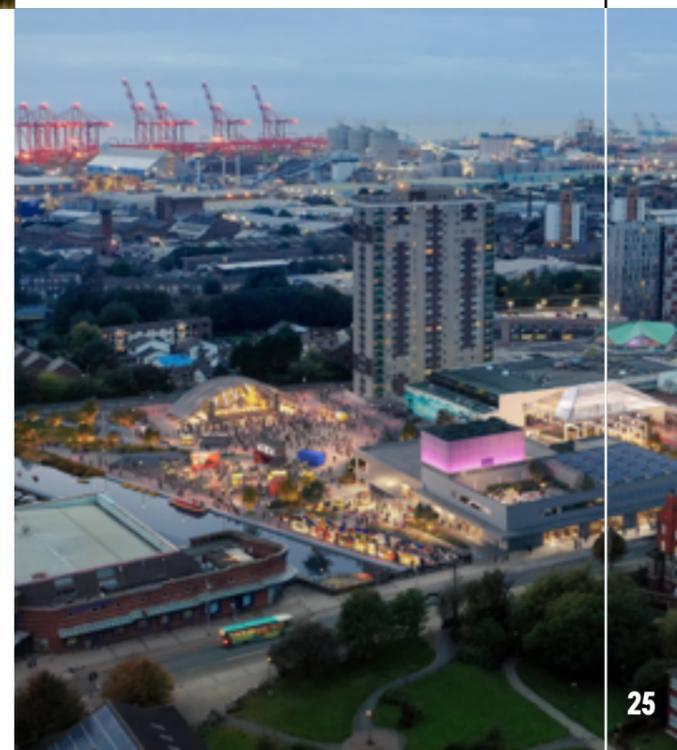
Its brand will evolve organically, led by local enterprise, social media content and place-based regeneration that highlights Bootle's ambition, resilience and character.



Sefton's Natural Coast

This positioning re-establishes the coast as a unified brand under the banner of Sefton's Natural Coast or England's Natural Coast. It provides a structure for promoting the borough's coastal towns, including Crosby, Ainsdale and Formby as part of a wider nature, recreation and wellbeing offer.

The approach supports collaborative marketing, consistent interpretation, and joint investment in visitor infrastructure and conservation. It also aligns with land managers such as the National Trust, embedding sustainable tourism principles into the brand's delivery.



HOW THE STRATEGY WORKS



SEFTON'S VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY IS UNDERPINNED BY A CLEAR AND CONNECTED FRAMEWORK THAT TRANSLATES INSIGHT INTO ACTION

It draws together detailed assessments of Sefton's product strengths, market performance, visitor trends and competitor destinations, alongside input from industry stakeholders and local partners. These insights have shaped the strategic drivers in terms of the mission, aims and objectives, as well as identifying market opportunities that in turn guide Sefton's positioning and visitor proposition as outlined above.

From this foundation, six strategic themes have been identified to tackle the key challenges and

realise Sefton's growth opportunities. These themes cover everything from major events and destination competitiveness to sustainability, skills and market development. Each theme is supported by a set of core priorities that are both direct and cross-cutting. Importantly, they focus investment and delivery on the things that matter most for Sefton's long-term success.

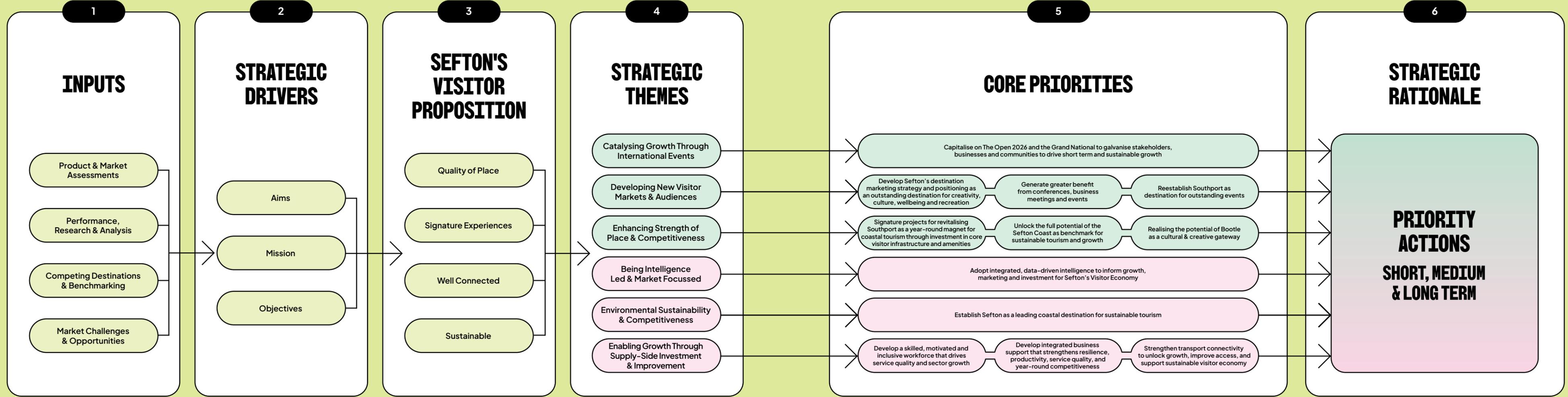
A clear rationale underpins each priority, guiding the development of targeted, time-bound actions over the short, medium and long term. This ensures Sefton's strategy is not only ambitious but also practical, dynamic and focused on delivery.



PRIORITY ACTIONS

The framework shown below sets out how these elements connect and will guide delivery through Sefton Council, Marketing Southport and the borough's wider visitor economy partners.

 = Direct = Cross Cutting



Strategic Theme 1

CATALYSING GROWTH THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

“**TOGETHER, THE OPEN AND THE GRAND NATIONAL CAN HELP REPOSITION SEFTON AS A CONFIDENT, COLLABORATIVE AND HIGH-PERFORMING DESTINATION.**”



Core Priority

CAPITALISE ON THE OPEN 2026 AND THE GRAND NATIONAL TO GALVANISE STAKEHOLDERS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO DRIVE SHORT-TERM AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Major international events represent a unique opportunity for Sefton to raise its visitor profile, stimulate investment and build long-term destination value. The Open 2026 and The Grand National are two of the UK's most high-profile sporting events, with the potential to generate global media coverage, attract high-spending visitors and act as powerful catalysts for regeneration, placemaking and promotional activity.

The Open 2026 is particularly significant. It offers Southport the chance to rebuild market share and regain visibility following years of subdued performance. With over 250,000 spectators attending, it will be the largest Championship held outside Scotland, and will bring unprecedented levels of attention and spend to the region. However, realising the full benefit will require a coordinated, whole-town approach that elevates both visitor experience and business readiness. The town must present itself at its best, getting the basics right in terms of cleanliness, welcome, signage and service standards, while also investing in its public realm and key assets such as Lord Street and the seafront.

The Championship is also a powerful catalyst for galvanising local partnerships. A coordinated local effort involving businesses, community groups and public agencies can set a new benchmark for collaboration. These partnerships, formed in the run-



up to The Open, should be sustained beyond 2026 as part of a long-term, place-led approach to visitor economy delivery in Southport.

A year-round programme of destination marketing and themed events will be essential to drive pre-event momentum. These should celebrate the undeniable strength of Southport's golfing product, hospitality offer and signature experiences, while working directly with the R&A, Southport's independent events sector and regional cultural networks. Marketing activity should focus on key catchment areas and intermediaries, supported by PR and content campaigns that position Southport as the host destination and capital of England's Golf Coast. Joint promotions with Liverpool will also be important to extend reach, joint packaging and influence trade channels.

The Grand National presents a parallel opportunity bringing 'Open Championship like' benefits to Sefton on an annual basis. As a globally recognised brand with deep associations to Sefton and Southport, the event provides an annual platform to promote the borough to national and international audiences. Strengthening cooperation between Aintree Racecourse and Sefton Council will be key, not just for race week, but for leveraging the racecourse's year-round event calendar. The race attracts thousands of visitors who pass through Sefton, creating opportunities to increase

discretionary spend in both Bootle and Southport. Marketing campaigns, joint offers and local activations should be designed to convert awareness into action, linking audiences with the borough's coastal and cultural experiences.

The Grand National and Aintree also represent a strategic opportunity for Bootle. The town's regeneration and growing cultural offer align with ambitions to drive local football and raise South Sefton's profile. While these opportunities are explored in greater detail later in the strategy, early efforts should focus on visibility and improving connections between Aintree and Bootle. The Leeds - Liverpool Canal is central to this, beginning in Bootle and flowing across Sefton, it passes iconic landmarks such as the Canal Turn, a globally recognised feature of the Grand National course. These associations offer a powerful, underused platform for storytelling and audience development, particularly around active, heritage and international markets.

Together, The Open and The Grand National can help reposition Sefton as a confident, collaborative and high-performing destination. If approached in the right way, they can galvanise local stakeholders, build business and visitor confidence, and create a legacy of leadership, quality and partnership that becomes the new standard for how Sefton delivers its visitor economy.

What We'll Do

- Deliver a coordinated, town-wide destination readiness programme in the lead-up to The Open 2026, encompassing public realm improvements, business engagement, volunteer training and enhanced customer experience.
- Launch targeted marketing and PR campaigns positioning Southport as the host destination for The Open and a base for racegoers during The Grand National.
- Work with the R&A, Jockey Club, BBC, ITV, golf tourism operators and regional partners to strengthen Southport's visibility across broadcast, digital and promotional channels.
- Develop joint programming and visitor offers with Aintree Racecourse and the Jockey Club to extend dwell time, spending and off-course experiences across Sefton.
- Build long-term legacy and investment partnerships in Southport and Bootle to ensure these events deliver lasting benefits.
- Establish a new benchmark for destination coordination and cross-sector working, maximising the profile, impact and legacy of Sefton's landmark events.

Strategic Theme 2

DEVELOPING NEW VISITOR MARKETS & AUDIENCES

This strategic theme responds to one of Sefton's most persistent visitor economy challenges- seasonality and fluctuations in demand. These patterns continue to constrain growth, reduce resilience, and limit the borough's ability to sustain and expand its market share. As such, the strategy aims to protect Sefton's existing visitor markets while actively re-engaging lapsed audiences and attracting new ones. A more diversified audience base will also support year-round footfall, reduce reliance on peak seasons and build long-term sustainability.

The approach is underpinned by three core priorities that include a refreshed destination marketing strategy, increasing value from the business events sector and a renewed focus on Southport's major events offer. Together, these priorities aim to reposition Sefton within the regional and national markets that have been identified to create the conditions for long-term demand growth.



Core Priority 1

DEVELOP SEFTON'S DESTINATION MARKETING STRATEGY AND POSITIONING AS AN OUTSTANDING DESTINATION FOR CREATIVITY, CULTURE, WELLBEING AND RECREATION

Leading with Sefton's identified destination brands will sharpen the borough's ability to reach target audiences, based on their demographic profiles and lifestyle preferences. Sefton's distinctiveness lies in its natural assets, quality of place and accessibility, all of which offer a strong foundation for destination marketing grounded in creativity, wellbeing, and sustainability.

Southport will remain Sefton's flagship brand, a classic coastal town reimagined for modern tastes, where leisure, culture and nature converge. Its proximity to the Sefton Coast, combined with a strong leisure, events and corporate offer, reinforces its role as the borough's principal attract destination and a vibrant gateway to the Natural Coast.

The Sefton Coast will be marketed as a standalone destination, with Crosby, Ainsdale, Formby and inland nature reserves promoted through nature-based and eco-tourism themes. Bootle's positioning as a Canalside creative hub will grow organically, led by grassroots content and influencer-led content rather than traditional campaigns.

This destination-led approach provides a platform for seasonal and thematic marketing campaigns under banners such as 'Seaside Escapes', 'Nature & Wellness' and 'Events & Sporting Greats'. These will be targeted to high-potential segments and aligned with regional marketing activity to extend reach into national and international markets.

A strong digital backbone will be essential. VisitSouthport.com must evolve into a conversion led platform with CRM functionality, third-party content and robust booking integration. Paid, organic and influencer content across social channels, combined with strategic partnerships with DMCs, travel trade and conference organisers, will open up multiple routes to market.

Destination marketing will also support group travel and trade campaigns, particularly those tied to events, golf tourism and short breaks. Curated itineraries will offer high-impact, ready-to-book products for coach operators, DMCs and group organisers. These packages will reinforce Sefton's brand associations, including its links to the Grand National, England's Golf Coast, Another Place and the National Trust sites.

Core Priority 2

GENERATE GREATER BENEFIT FROM CONFERENCES, BUSINESS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Business events play a critical role in driving midweek, year-round demand and increasing discretionary spend across Sefton's hotels, venues, restaurants and cultural assets. With MLEC in Southport, the borough has a major opportunity to reposition itself as a high-quality, coastal conferencing destination.

MLEC will act as the cornerstone of Southport's business events offer, attracting multi-day events from medical, academic, political and corporate sectors. This growth must be matched by improvements in the town's accommodation supply, particularly branded and mid-to-upper range stock within walking distance of the venue. Strengthening the local food, retail and cultural offer will also be key to destination appeal.

To compete effectively, Southport must shift to a proactive sales model. This includes establishing a conference

ambassador programme, building a sales pipeline in advance of MLEC's opening, reactivating past leads (e.g. IDTA) and targeting associations with events of 500-700 delegates. Partnership with the Liverpool City Region Convention Bureau will also be essential to ensure alignment with wider regional strategies and maximise referrals.

Incentives and bidding support will be vital to attracting larger, multi-day conferences, securing repeat business and strengthening the pipeline of enquiries.

Southport's value proposition as a well-connected, high-quality coastal destination provides a distinctive alternative to traditional urban centres such as Blackpool and Harrogate. This competitive advantage should be placed front and centre in sales materials and bid submissions, helping to differentiate the destination and build lasting relationships with conference organisers.



Core Priority 3

RE-ESTABLISH SOUTHPORT AS A DESTINATION FOR OUTSTANDING EVENTS

In Southport, established annual events such as the Air Show, Flower Show, British Musical Fireworks Championship and Food & Drink Festival already attract strong regional audiences. The next phase of development should focus on enhancing their quality, extending their seasonal impact and elevating their national profile. This will involve collaboration with partners such as the Royal Horticultural Society, investment in event infrastructure at Victoria Park, and the evolution of existing formats to strengthen visitor experiences.

For the Southport Air Show, this includes greater investment in ground displays and Air Show Village content, alongside a reimagined format that reduces dependence on the seafront and enables more flexible, sustainable and weather-resilient delivery. In parallel, opportunities such as light and sound festivals focused around Marine Lake animation through MLEC, and the association with the British Musical Fireworks Championship, will further establish the town's reputation as a market leader for high-impact, visually choreographed

events capable of broadening audience reach. Alongside this, a more diverse year-round programme is needed to animate the town centre and support local businesses and creative talent. A curated calendar of grassroots events, pop-ups and touring exhibitions can help activate key locations such as Lord Street, the Market Quarter and Princess Diana Memorial Gardens.

The Atkinson will have a central role in leading cultural programming and developing new audiences and play a key role in reinforcing Southport's position as a creative coastal destination.

The return of The Open to Royal Birkdale in 2026 provides a significant opportunity to reposition Southport as a world-class events destination. A curated lead-in programme, themed around Southport's positioning as 'England's Golfing Capital', will generate momentum, grow awareness and support long-term visitor growth. This should act as a catalyst for establishing a more strategic events model, one that places legacy, destination impact and market development at its core.

What We'll Do

- Deliver an integrated destination marketing strategy aligned to key segments and Sefton's three destination brands, supported by seasonal and thematic campaigns.
- Build Southport's conference sales model in preparation for MLEC opening, including ambassador networks, sales collateral, trade engagement and accommodation development plans.
- Invest in Southport's signature events and develop new events to raise quality and reach, supported by town centre programming and grassroots cultural partnerships.
- Leverage The Open 2026 and The Grand National to amplify Sefton's brand visibility, target high-value audiences, and drive wider engagement with Bootle and coastal towns.

Strategic Theme 3

ENHANCING STRENGTH OF PLACE AND COMPETITIVENESS

The quality of place, experience and infrastructure across Southport, the Sefton Coast and Bootle will define Sefton's destination appeal and future growth.

Targeted investment will be essential to drive this transition, build private sector confidence and address the challenges facing both established and emerging destinations.

Core Priority 1

SIGNATURE PROJECTS FOR REVITALISING SOUTHPORT AS A YEAR-ROUND MAGNET FOR COASTAL TOURISM

Southport is a well-known coastal destination, but it is under pressure. Market share has eroded, with the town struggling to meet the expectations of more affluent and discerning short break and group travel audiences. Visitor spend is well below the city region average and hotel occupancy and ADR remain significantly lower than comparable destinations. These trends reflect a gradual decline in the quality and mix of visitor infrastructure and a growing reliance on lower-spending local audiences.

The town's competitiveness is now being addressed through the development of a new Place Strategy, aligned with this Visitor Economy Strategy. The priority is to revitalise Southport's core proposition through investment in key assets that can drive destination appeal, extend length of stay and stimulate economic activity. These include Lord Street, the seafront and Marine Lake, Victoria Park, The Atkinson and the town's accommodation offer.

Lord Street is the jewel in Southport's crown and a defining feature of its visitor identity. With its historic architecture, tree-lined boulevard and heritage character, it has the potential to be a vibrant destination for shopping, dining and leisure. However, vacancy rates, a limited

hospitality offer, and the dominance of road traffic continue to weaken its appeal. Revitalising Lord Street is therefore critical, not only to reinforce Southport's positioning as a high-quality short break destination, but also to anchor wider regeneration by connecting the Market Quarter, Scarisbrick Avenue and the seafront into a coherent and compelling destination experience.

The seafront plays a dual role: it acts both as a key visitor destination and as the northern gateway to the Sefton Coast. It complements Lord Street by offering a broader mix of leisure attractions and family experiences. Assets such as Southport Pier, King's Gardens, seafront attractions and the emerging Marine Lake Events Centre (MLEC) can support this diversification. However, seasonal patterns of demand and limited weather-resilient infrastructure currently constrain growth.

Unlocking this potential requires an ambitious approach. Southport's seafront attractions has the capacity to evolve into a regionally significant theme park, anchoring a cluster of year-round family attractions. Investment in Marine Lake and its surroundings is also needed to position it as a hub for events, recreation and waterside experiences. Strengthening connections between the seafront, MLEC and Victoria Park will

also support hotel development and reinforce the town's position as a multi-day destination.

Victoria Park is the home of the Southport Flower Show and is fast becoming the town's leading outdoor events space. Recent investments mean it can host up to 15,000 visitors, but further work is needed to ensure it is commercially viable year-round.

This includes improved infrastructure (e.g. drainage, utilities, amenities), stronger links to the seafront, and a permanent horticultural offer that reinforces the park's association with the Flower Show brand and can offer a year round experience.

Accommodation is a critical dependency. Southport must diversify and raise the quality of its visitor accommodation to support MLEC, attract new leisure markets and compete for group travel, golf and incentive travel segments. Priorities include securing a new operator for the Waterfront Hotel, enabling development at Fairways and along the seafront, revitalising the guest house sector and attracting investment in alternative formats like serviced apartments, hostels and eco-lodges.



What We'll Do

- Invest in priority projects on Lord Street, including public realm and hospitality/cultural assets.
- Expand the seafront offer through development of seafront attractions, upgrades to King's Gardens and improved links with MLEC.
- Develop Marine Lake as a hub for events, waterside activities and family recreation.
- Improve infrastructure and year-round viability of Victoria Park as the borough's signature outdoor events venue.
- Secure a mix of branded and independent accommodation to support growth across all visitor segments.

Core Priority 2

UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE SEFTON COAST AS A DISTINCTIVE NATURAL TOURISM ASSET WHILE SAFEGUARDING AND CONSERVING ITS UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

The Sefton Coast is one of the borough's most distinctive visitor assets. Its natural landscapes, biodiversity, and recreational value provide Sefton with a compelling advantage. The coast offers a strong counterpoint to the town-based experiences of Southport and Bootle and plays a central role in shaping Sefton's wider identity as a place of wellbeing, beauty and adventure.

Despite its popularity with local day visitors, the coast underperforms economically. Visitor infrastructure is inconsistent, dwell time is low and peak-season pressures strain habitats, amenities and access routes. The goal is to transition from a volume-driven, seasonal destination to a managed, experience-led one, supporting conservation, sustainable travel and a stronger economic return.

This transition will be anchored by investment in access, interpretation, wayfinding and low-impact accommodation. The Sefton Coast Path will be a central spine linking the four main gateways of Southport, Ainsdale, Formby and Crosby, enabling better management of visitor loadings. Improved integration with the Merseyrail network will help support dispersal, modal shift and access to more sensitive locations.

Crosby Coastal Park has strong potential to attract higher-spending regional visitors, particularly given its connection to Another Place. But signage, amenities and interpretation need



“ WITH TARGETED INVESTMENT IN SIGNAGE, INTERPRETATION AND MODEST AMENITIES AT THE FORMER SAND WINNING WORKS, IT COULD APPEAL TO WILDLIFE AND EDUCATION-FOCUSED VISITORS WHILE BRINGING GREATER DIVERSITY TO SOUTHPORT'S LEISURE OFFER. ”

strengthening. Public realm, recreational infrastructure and family facilities could significantly raise dwell time and spend. Links to Crosby town centre and local amenities like South Road, as well as the creative reuse of buildings like the Coastguard Station also present opportunities.

Formby is one of the Sefton Coast's most popular yet ecologically sensitive locations, recognised for its red squirrels, dune landscapes and strong visitor management. National Trust investment is helping to manage visitor pressure, but further improvements in orientation, circular routes, interpretation and nature learning are needed. A modest visitor centre and low impact eco cabins could enhance the experience and support education, sustainability and wellness, provided they align with SSSI protections and long-term management plans.

Ainsdale-on-Sea is well positioned between Southport and Formby and has untapped potential to support accommodation and learning-based product. Investment in sites like Pontins and Toad Hall could unlock short-break, activity and education markets. Stronger walking and cycling links to Southport via Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills will also support modal shift and help spread visitor loadings.

To the north, RSPB Marshside offers a unique opportunity to act as the northernmost gateway to the Sefton Coast. With targeted investment in signage, interpretation and modest amenities at the former sand winning works, it could appeal to wildlife and education-focused visitors while bringing greater diversity to Southport's leisure offer.

What We'll Do

- Invest in access, signage and amenities at all four gateways to enhance the visitor experience and manage visitor loadings.
- Work with partners to upgrade the Sefton Coast Path to National benchmark standards and improve links to Merseyrail and active travel routes.
- Support investment in low-impact accommodation, recreational and nature-based attractions.
- Enhance interpretation and infrastructure at Marshside, Formby and Ainsdale to grow wellness, nature and educational markets.



Core Priority 3

ESTABLISH BOOTLE AS A VIBRANT AND CONNECTED VISITOR DESTINATION

Bootle is an emerging visitor destination with the potential to become a distinctive and vibrant Canalside town that plays a key role in Sefton's visitor economy. Rooted in a proud industrial, military and maritime past, the town's future is being shaped by creative energy, community resilience and bold regeneration centred on place, culture and connectivity.

The transformation of Bootle town centre is being led by major investment in and around The Strand, which is being reimaged as a dynamic civic hub. Plans include new cultural, leisure and commercial uses, stronger links to the waterfront, and a more diverse high street economy. Adjacent to this, Salt & Tar is establishing Bootle as an authentic cultural venue within the Liverpool City Region, offering live music, street food and independent programming that reflects and celebrates the area's creative identity. The longer-term ambition is to deliver a permanent venue for Salt & Tar, forming part of a new cultural spine that connects The Strand with the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and Bootle's green and civic spaces.

The canal corridor is pivotal to this vision, not only as a destination, but as a physical and symbolic link between Bootle and the rest of the borough. From Crosby Coastal Park via Rimrose Valley to Sefton's inland towns and villages in the east of the borough, the canal offers an active travel route and heritage narrative that can animate public space, support events and attract new audiences. The opportunity to develop Carolina Basin as a flagship Canalside hub, combining visitor amenities, heritage interpretation, creative workspace and community enterprise would bring critical mass and an important anchor for the town's visitor offer.

Investment in lighting, signage, cycling infrastructure and public realm are needed to activate the canal and connect it more fully to the town centre and Bootle's neighbourhoods. A Bootle Canal Heritage Trail, developed in partnership with local communities, could feature interpretation, public art, oral histories and digital wayfinding, creating a compelling visitor experience that reflects Bootle's social and wartime history.

“
THE TOWN'S FUTURE IS BEING SHAPED BY CREATIVE ENERGY, COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND BOLD REGENERATION.
”

Demand drivers also include Aintree Racecourse and as a gateway location to Liverpool. Bootle's growing cultural ecosystem, including Salt & Tar, The Lock & Quay, independent venues and grassroots programming is already attracting new audiences. Embedding this offer into the town's wider economy will help support day and evening visitors, event-led footfall and, overtime, short-break markets.

Looking ahead, there is scope to develop a stronger accommodation offer, particularly as visitor numbers grow through festivals, cultural programmes and nearby regional attractions. Sites within the SAFE Regeneration area, close to Lock & Quay or around The Strand, could support short-stay and serviced accommodation models aligned with event, group and business travellers.



What We'll Do

- Transform The Strand into a dynamic civic and visitor hub with cultural, commercial and leisure uses.
- Create a permanent home for Salt & Tar and deliver high-quality public realm improvements.
- Develop Bootle Canal side as a flagship visitor amenity and community asset.
- Establish a Bootle Canal Heritage Trail and activate the canal corridor as a leisure and cultural route.
- Explore opportunities for accommodation to support short-break and event-led markets.

Strategic Theme 4

BEING INTELLIGENCE LED & MARKET FOCUSED

“EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES RANGING FROM AI-POWERED ANALYTICS AND DIGITAL TRACKING TOOLS TO REAL TIME SENTIMENT ANALYSIS WILL BE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT.”



Core Priority

ADOPT INTEGRATED, DATA-DRIVEN INTELLIGENCE TO INFORM GROWTH, MARKETING AND INVESTMENT FOR SEFTON'S VISITOR ECONOMY

To compete in an increasingly dynamic and digital visitor economy, Sefton must become more intelligence-led, making better use of data to shape decisions, refine its offer and anticipate future trends. This means embedding a more integrated, technology-enabled approach to destination intelligence to drive marketing, investment and product development, but with sharper insight and strategic intent.

Research for this strategy has highlighted clear gaps in intelligence sharing, visitor profiling and the routine use of qualitative and quantitative data across the destination. Without a deeper understanding of audience behaviours, motivations, satisfaction, sentiment and spend patterns, Sefton's ability to respond to market shifts, as well as being able to measure the full value of tourism and events will remain constrained.

The borough already benefits from investment in key tools such as STR for hotel performance, STEAM for visitor volume and value and Beauclair for footfall. These platforms provide a solid foundation but are not yet being optimised to inform wider destination planning. A stronger data architecture, built on interoperability and shared access, can help unlock their value and drive greater insight through a greater understanding of key market segments, along with their characteristics and value.

Emerging technologies ranging from AI-powered analytics and digital tracking tools to real time sentiment analysis will be increasingly important.

These innovations allow monitoring and interpretation of visitor behaviours across multiple touchpoints including social media, reviews, search queries and digital platforms. They also enable faster response to market fluctuations and early identification of new opportunities.

Sefton should also draw more consistently on national and international data sources, including VisitBritain trends, ONS datasets, the International Passenger Survey, MOSIAC profiling and UKCAMS for business events. Combined with local data and primary research, this will provide a richer, multi-dimensional picture of Sefton's audiences and performance.

Crucially, this intelligence must be made actionable. It should shape how experiences are designed, how marketing is deployed, how events are programmed and how investment is prioritised.

It must also support inclusive growth by helping measure accessibility, sustainability, quality of experience and economic and social return and ensure alignment with the KPIs and performance framework set out later in this strategy.

What We'll Do

- Establish a shared visitor intelligence framework for Sefton and its partners to collect, analyse, segment and interpret data more consistently.
- Optimise existing platforms (STR, STEAM, Beauclair) through better integration, training and interpretation.
- Invest in MOSIAC market segmentation data to assess audience demographics, characteristics and value.
- Expand use of AI-powered tools to monitor sentiment, identify emerging trends and track visitor behaviours in real time.
- Strengthen business event intelligence through active participation in UKCAMS and MICE-specific data platforms.
- Combine national and international datasets with local research to inform destination planning and investment.
- Link intelligence gathering to Sefton's KPI and evaluation framework to measure impact, quality and inclusivity.

Strategic Theme 5

BUILDING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & COMPETITIVENESS

“**THE PEOPLE, PLACES AND PLANET FRAMEWORK OFFERS A COMPLEMENTARY, PLACE-SPECIFIC STRUCTURE FOR SHAPING SEFTON’S SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLANS.**”



Core Priority

ESTABLISH SEFTON AS A LEADING COASTAL DESTINATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sefton's visitor economy is diverse and includes many businesses operating across hospitality and cultural venues, attractions, retail, travel and events. With destinations such as Southport located along an internationally important natural coastline, the borough is uniquely positioned to strengthen the connection between tourism, nature and environmental responsibility. Visitor decision making is increasingly influenced by destinations that demonstrate strong sustainability credentials in terms of reducing carbon emissions, minimising waste and promoting responsible travel. Those destinations taking practical action are more likely to attract environmentally conscious visitors and improve their reputation, as well as the opportunity to access regional and national funding programmes. For individual businesses, these actions are also more likely to increase visibility across destination marketing platforms and increased competitiveness when bidding for contracts.

As Sefton's 'attract' destination, and a town projected to face increased flood risk by 2050, Southport must demonstrate leadership in this space by building on existing good practice and work towards a coordinated, destination-wide transition to sustainability. This

presents a significant opportunity to align with regional and national net zero ambitions, as well as reducing the operational costs for businesses while positioning itself as a benchmark for sustainable tourism. The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) provides a recognised international framework to guide this transition and will enable Sefton to assess its environmental, social and governance performance alongside other leading destinations. Participation in the GDS-Index would help guide delivery and establish a consistent quality standard for initiatives to work towards, as well as enhancing Sefton's wider reputation as a responsible and environmentally friendly destination.

The People, Places and Planet framework offers a complementary, place-specific structure for shaping Sefton's sustainability action plans. It ensures that environmental priorities (Planet), place-based investment (Places) and community wellbeing and engagement (People) are embedded across the visitor economy to support a balanced and future proofed approach to destination development. Along with the GDS index, the frameworks offer both strategic direction and the practical tools needed to deliver systemic change and achieve long-term impact.

“**ALONG WITH THE GDS INDEX, THE FRAMEWORKS OFFER BOTH STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND THE PRACTICAL TOOLS NEEDED TO DELIVER SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND ACHIEVE LONG-TERM IMPACT.**”

What We'll Do

- Align Sefton's destination development and marketing plans with the People, Places and Planet framework to embed sustainability into delivery and governance structures.
- Establish Southport as the borough's sustainability pilot, working towards recognition via the Global Destination Sustainability Index and identifying clear baselines and improvement targets.
- Support visitor economy businesses to adopt greener practices through targeted toolkits, resources, and signposting to regional and national net zero programmes.
- Prioritise low-carbon, active and public transport connectivity, especially to and between gateway destinations as part of the wider sustainability approach.
- Embed sustainable event principles across Sefton's festivals, conferences and major sporting events, encouraging green supply chains, waste reduction and low-impact infrastructure.
- Promote Sefton as a responsible destination to environmentally conscious visitors, ensuring sustainability is visible in all digital platforms, content and campaigns.
- Build sustainability KPIs into the broader visitor economy performance framework, ensuring accountability and continual improvement.

Strategic Theme 6

ENABLING GROWTH THROUGH SUPPLY SIDE INVESTMENT & IMPROVEMENT

Achieving long term growth in Sefton's visitor economy will require more than marketing campaigns and new events. It demands a stronger supply-side, one that is resilient, productive, well-connected and capable of delivering high-quality experiences to meet changing visitor expectations. Addressing the current challenges around skills, workforce, business resilience and transport is prerequisite to making this shift.

Sefton's strength lies in its potential to grow as a year-round visitor destination that attracts investment, retains talent and builds lasting visitor loyalty. Achieving this requires a proactive approach to skills development, targeted business support and improved transport connectivity. Success will depend on close collaboration between local partners such as InvestSefton and Sefton@Work, working alongside regional and national bodies including Skills England, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Growth Hub and VisitBritain.

Core Priority 1

DEVELOP A SKILLED, MOTIVATED AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE THAT DRIVES SERVICE QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY AND SECTOR GROWTH

The visitor economy already employs nearly 5,000 people in Sefton and numbers are slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels. But structural challenges persist particularly around seasonality, recruitment and retention. Low pay, unsocial hours and limited career progression continue to deter new entrants and limit the sector's ability to build the consistent service quality required to compete effectively.

A strong pipeline of training and employment support already exists, but it needs more focused alignment with local employer needs. Initiatives such as the UK Hospitality Passport and LCR Skills Bootcamps offer practical, work-ready routes into employment. Sefton's further education colleges and Sefton@Work also provide a critical platform for delivering pre-employment training, CPD and apprenticeships, and are already collaborating on new bootcamps and management training offers.

At secondary level, there's an opportunity to strengthen curriculum links to the visitor economy and build awareness of the career pathways available. Meanwhile, customer service and visitor welcome initiatives including Welcome Host and Welcome to Excellence should be scaled up to raise standards, boost productivity and improve visitor satisfaction.

Sefton's colleges and training providers are willing partners, the priority now is to scale and coordinate delivery, particularly around key events like The Open, and to position the visitor economy as a serious, inclusive and future focused career path.



Core Priority 2

DEVELOP INTEGRATED BUSINESS SUPPORT THAT STRENGTHENS RESILIENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, SERVICE QUALITY AND YEAR-ROUND COMPETITIVENESS

Many visitor economy businesses across Sefton are facing cost pressures, staff shortages and seasonal volatility. These challenges are undermining business confidence and delaying investment - and in some cases, stalling growth altogether. Feedback from local operators has highlighted the need for more targeted support particularly around access to finance, digital innovation, workforce development and market diversification.

The foundations for a stronger business support ecosystem are already in place. Organisations such as Invest Sefton, the LCR Growth Hub and VisitBritain offer a suite of tools, advice and funding routes. But too often, the eligibility criteria for support cannot be met, or they are simply underused. This strategy calls for a more integrated, diagnostic-led approach, brokering businesses into the most appropriate support, and aligning with wider opportunities such as The Open 2026, MLEC and the region's sector growth plans and supply chains.

Peer networks, mentoring programmes and place-based business support initiatives such as those supported by UKSPF, can all help accelerate innovation, improve productivity and build confidence. Meanwhile, access to regional finance products such as the Flexible Growth Fund and the Seed Fund will help unlock investment in new visitor products, services and experiences.

Critically, the link between visitor economy performance and destination competitiveness must be made clear. As Sefton strengthens its brand, offer and infrastructure, the businesses operating within it need the confidence, capability and support to match that ambition.



Core Priority 3

STRENGTHEN TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY TO UNLOCK GROWTH, IMPROVE ACCESS AND SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY

Transport connectivity is central to Sefton's visitor economy performance. While Southport benefits from strong rail links to Liverpool and Manchester, poor regional reliability and the lack of direct services to Preston, the West Coast Main Line and Scotland remain barriers to growth. These limitations are restricting access to key visitor markets and diminishing the borough's appeal for investment and events.

Reinstating strategic rail infrastructure, such as the Burscough Curves, remains a long-term priority and will be critical to accessing new markets and improving travel times. More immediate improvements must focus on rail reliability and integration with the wider regional and national transport system. Active lobbying, partnership working and alignment with the Combined Authority's

transport priorities will be key to making this case. At the same time, Sefton's rail connectivity, particularly the Merseyrail network, presents a real opportunity for sustainable growth. The ability to travel seamlessly between the borough's coastal gateways and town centres supports modal shift, improves the visitor experience and helps manage seasonal congestion. Investment in ticketing, wayfinding and infrastructure upgrades will strengthen this proposition and support the delivery of the wider visitor economy strategy.

Better connectivity also supports inclusivity and visitor dispersal, ensuring that all parts of the borough, including Bootle, Southport and inland towns, benefit from regional growth, and that businesses can access the workforce, suppliers and customers they need to thrive.

BETTER CONNECTIVITY SUPPORTS INCLUSIVITY AND VISITOR DISPERSAL, ENSURING THAT ALL PARTS OF THE BOROUGH, INCLUDING BOOTLE, SOUTHPORT AND INLAND TOWNS, BENEFIT FROM REGIONAL GROWTH.



What We'll Do

- Scale up local training and employment programmes by aligning existing offers (e.g. Skills Bootcamps, Hospitality Passport) with employer needs and upcoming events, supported by FE colleges, Sefton@Work and secondary education partners.
- Launch a coordinated business support programme for visitor economy SMEs, brokering access to investment, skills, innovation and net zero support through partners such as Invest Sefton, LCR Growth Hub and VisitBritain.
- Establish dedicated peer-to-peer networks and mentoring schemes to improve business resilience, productivity and knowledge exchange.
- Advocate for improved rail connectivity including the reinstatement of Burscough Curves and better integration of Northern and Merseyrail services, while maximising the potential of sustainable travel through visitor-focused ticketing, wayfinding and active travel initiatives.

COORDINATED LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND DELIVERY

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY – THE ROLE OF MARKETING SOUTHPORT

Successful delivery of this strategy depends on a coordinated, borough wide effort to bring together local businesses, delivery agencies and communities through stronger, more strategic partnerships. Sefton already benefits from several established bodies that contribute to how its destinations are managed, funded and promoted. However, these groups often operate in isolation and require a more joined-up approach to maximise their collective impact.

To address this, Marketing Southport will be formalised as the official Destination Management Organisation (DMO). Co-ordinated and resourced by Sefton Council, the DMO will help lead the strategic coordination of destination planning, promotion, investment and product development.

It will act as the connector between local and regional partners, aligning efforts to secure funding, activate flagship projects, and raise Sefton's profile in priority

visitor markets. It will also provide a consistent voice for the sector at a regional and national level which will involve engaging with the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), LCR Combined Authority, and VisitEngland to ensure Sefton is well positioned in wider programmes and investment pipelines.

A fully coordinated DMO will increase the borough's visibility in key markets and create stronger opportunities to influence regional and national policy. The DMO will act as a proactive advocate for Sefton's visitor economy and coastal destinations more widely, applying collective insight and championing the borough's potential across industry networks and government forums.

To support continuity and visibility across digital platforms, it is recommended that the DMO continues to align with existing assets and channels using a recognised prefix such as 'Marketing', 'Visit', or 'Experience Southport' to maintain brand recognition and SEO performance.

DESTINATION-LEVEL DELIVERY AND GOVERNANCE

At a destination level, Marketing Southport will work with and support the evolution of three key stakeholder partnerships:



SOUTHPORT
Through the Marketing Southport Board and collaboration with Southport BID.



SEFTON'S NATURAL COAST
Through the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership.



BOOTLE
Through the emerging Bootle Cultural Partnership, to deliver place based and community regeneration programmes.

These partnerships brings place-specific expertise and relationships and will play a key role in shaping and delivering local actions. However, to unlock their full potential, they must work more collaboratively across the borough, guided by a common framework, shared objectives and coordinated leadership from the DMO.

IN SOUTHPORT, MARKETING SOUTHPORT WILL ACT AS THE OVERARCHING BOARD, UNDERPINNED BY SUB-GROUPS FOCUSED ON:

-  Town Centre & Major Events
-  Destination Marketing
-  Business Tourism
-  Destination Welcome
-  Travel Trade Development

This model builds on existing collaboration between Sefton Council and Southport BID, providing a more robust structure to engage businesses and investors. It will also lead strategically on the town's evolving place proposition.

On the Sefton Coast, achieving Heritage Coast designation would significantly elevate the role of the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership, positioning it as the lead body for one of England's most ecologically and culturally significant coastal areas.

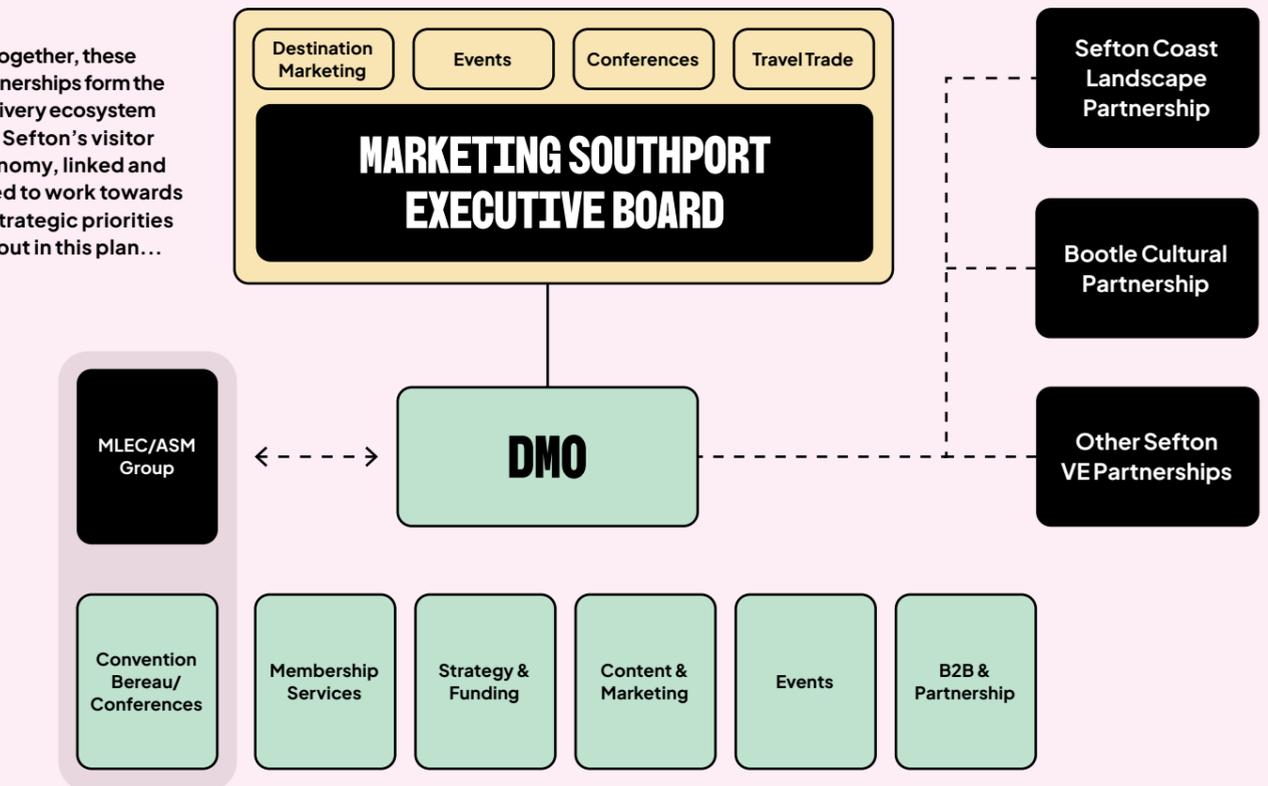
With dedicated tourism input, the partnership would coordinate across landowners, enhance sustainable access and develop gateway experiences that balance conservation with high-quality visitor engagement.

In Bootle, the visitor economy will be supported through the emerging cultural partnership that will drive Bootle's Town of Culture BID, if successful Bootle will be awarded funds to deliver a comprehensive cultural events programme in 2028 building on the Sat and Tar story along with the wider regeneration strategy helping to deliver long term change. The newly established Town of Culture Board will help aid the development of a Place Strategy for the town, bringing together residents, the local MP, Sefton

Council, businesses and community organisations.

By bringing together public, private, voluntary and community partners to lead coordinated place shaping, the Place Strategy will play a central role in supporting tourism, content creation, inward investment and event development as part of Bootle's evolving visitor offer.

Together, these partnerships form the delivery ecosystem for Sefton's visitor economy, linked and aligned to work towards the strategic priorities set out in this plan...



WORKING ACROSS AND BEYOND THE BOROUGH

The DMO's role extends beyond local coordination. Marketing Southport will also:

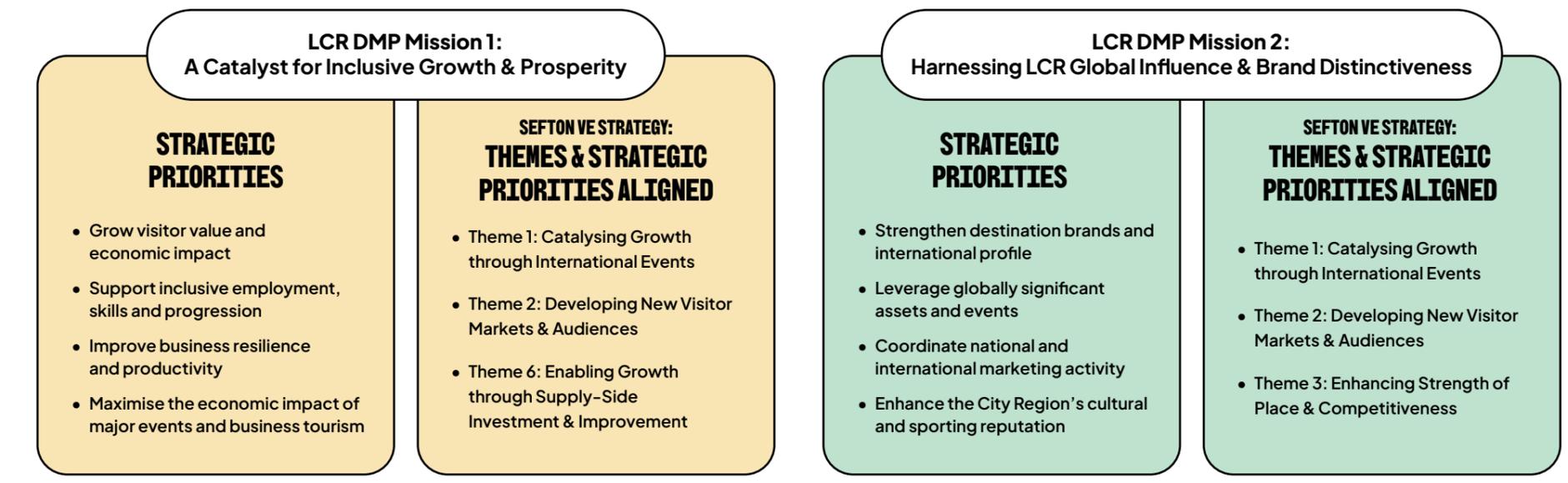
 <p>PARTNERSHIP Act as Sefton's lead partner with the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Partnership and Combined Authority</p>	 <p>FUNDING Support joined-up planning with the City Region's transport, skills and economic agencies</p>
 <p>REPRESENTATION Represent Sefton in national campaigns led by VisitBritain/VisitEngland</p>	 <p>FUNDING Collaborate on regional funding bids and strategic marketing programmes</p>

These relationships will ensure Sefton's visitor economy priorities are embedded in wider policy and funding agendas, while unlocking investment in infrastructure, skills and product development.



ALIGNING WITH REGIONAL PRIORITIES & DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Sefton's Visitor Economy Strategy has been developed to align explicitly with the Liverpool City Region Destination Management Plan (2025-2030). The DMP is structured around three strategic Missions, each supported by a set of City Region strategic priorities. Sefton's strategy aligns with this framework, translating these Missions and priorities into place based delivery for Southport, the Sefton Coast and Bootle.



**LCR DMP Mission 3:
A Thriving and Resilient Visitor Economy**

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

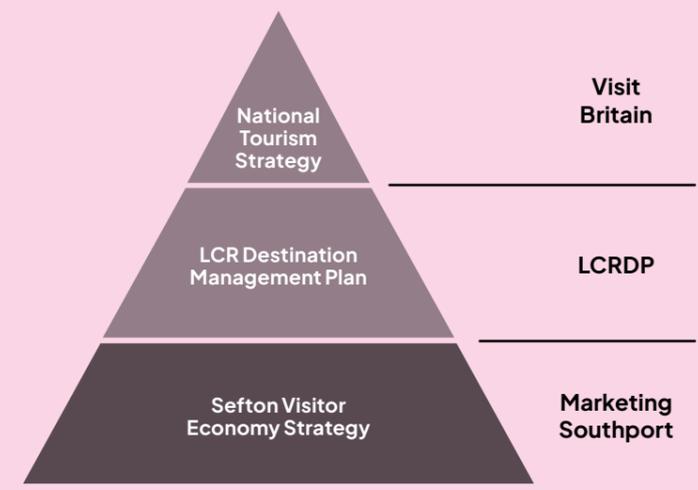
- Improve quality of place and visitor experience
- Embed sustainability and climate resilience
- Improve access, connectivity and visitor movement
- Use data and insight to inform decision-making
- Strengthen governance and partnership working

**SEFTON VE STRATEGY:
THEMES & STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ALIGNED**

- Theme 3: Enhancing Strength of Place & Competitiveness
- Theme 4: Being Intelligence Led & Market Focused
- Theme 5: Building Environmental Sustainability & Competitiveness
- Theme 6: Enabling Growth through Supply-Side Investment & Improvement

LINKS TO REGIONAL AND NATIONAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIPS

This strategy sets out how Sefton works within national and city-region visitor economy partnerships, translating shared priorities into local delivery while playing an active and influential role in shaping wider regional programmes.



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL NETWORKS

Local communities play a vital role in shaping the visitor experience, acting as both hosts and advocates for the places they live. This strategy recognises that visitor economy growth must deliver tangible benefits for residents ranging from improved local amenities and access to culture, to new jobs, skills and enterprise opportunities. Delivery will be shaped through active engagement with community partners, including:

-  **FRIENDS GROUPS AND LANDOWNER PARTNERSHIPS ON THE SEFTON COAST**
-  **CULTURAL AND HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS IN BOOTLE AND SOUTHPORT**
-  **GRASSROOTS EVENT ORGANISERS AND PRODUCERS**
-  **COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS SEFTON'S TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

Through the DMO and partnership Boards, these groups will have clearer routes to participate in delivery, contribute ideas and co-design projects that reflect local identity and aspirations. This will help ensure the strategy remains grounded in Sefton's distinct places to fostering pride, advocacy and local ownership of the visitor economy.

What We'll Do

Over the lifetime of this strategy, Sefton will:

- Refresh Marketing Southport as the formal DMO, coordinating destination development, marketing and investment.
- Expand the DMOs remit to include convention bureau services, membership support, funding, events, business tourism and travel trade engagement.
- Strengthen partnerships across Southport, the Sefton Coast and Bootle to deliver a borough-wide visitor economy approach.
- Create local sub-groups in Southport for events, marketing, business tourism and product development.
- Support Heritage Coast designation and enhance the Sefton Coast Partnership's role in visitor management.
- Progress the Town of Culture BID and formalise governance in conjunction with partners.
- Deepen engagement with regional and national partners, including LVEP and VisitBritain/VisitEngland.
- Apply consistent digital and brand practices to improve visibility and reach.
- Embed community participation in delivery, enabling local groups to shape programmes that reflect place identity.

OUR VISITOR ECONOMY IN ACTION (10 YEAR ACTION PLAN)

Strategic Theme 1 – Major Events as a Catalyst for Growth

CORE PRIORITY: CAPITALISE ON THE OPEN 2026 AND THE GRAND NATIONAL TO GALVANISE STAKEHOLDERS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO DRIVE SHORT-TERM AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

THE OPEN 2026 – SOUTHPORT						
AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Business Support & Toolkit	Deliver business readiness toolkit with Southport BID, Invest Sefton & LCR Growth Hub. Includes marketing, welcome, accessibility, joint offers.	Improve business capability and readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of businesses engaged Toolkit uptake Workshop participation 	✓		
Training & Recruitment	Coordinate town-wide Welcome Host training with Sefton@Work, Southport College, Hugh Baird etc, prioritising recruitment, onboarding & service excellence.	Raise service standards and inclusive workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of trained staff Employer feedback Volunteer recruitment 	✓		
Marketing & Media Campaign	Deliver year-long campaign positioning Southport as host destination. Include PR, case studies, thematic content & joint promotions with VisitBritain/EGC.	Raise brand profile and attract priority markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign reach SEO uplift Conversion rates 	✓		
Town Activation & Events	Curate town-wide events aligned to destination themes (golf, food, outdoors, heritage etc). Use civic spaces to animate town and increase dwell time.	Boost footfall, spend and seasonal appeal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of events Visitor dwell time Feedback 	✓		
Southport Welcome	Launch branded welcome programme to include signage, banners, station dressing, park & ride upgrades etc. Link with training & business toolkit.	Enhance arrival experience and destination pride.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction ratings Wayfinding audits Brand visibility 	✓		
Town Centre & Seafront	Deliver seafront and town centre upgrades including floral displays, cleansing, signage, parking. Engage businesses through competitions and campaigns.	Strengthen town presentation and participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation rates Visitor sentiment 	✓		
Accommodation Packages	Support themed stay offers & bundled packages targeting VFR, short stays, pre/post event markets. Promote proximity to Royal Birkdale.	Increase overnight stays and spend in town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADR uplift Occupancy rates Offer take-up 	✓		
Delivery Coordination & Legacy	Set up multi-agency Task Force to manage Open delivery and legacy learning. Test new delivery models and feed into town centre regeneration.	Build delivery capacity and future-readiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group meetings; Governance reviews; Legacy plan integration 	✓		

Strategic Theme 1 – Major Events as a Catalyst for Growth

CORE PRIORITY: CAPITALISE ON THE OPEN 2026 AND THE GRAND NATIONAL TO GALVANISE STAKEHOLDERS, BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO DRIVE SHORT-TERM AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

THE GRAND NATIONAL						
AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Gateway Signage & Arrival	Improve signage/branding along Dunningbridge Rd, Ormskirk Rd, Aintree Station & Switch Island. Branded gateways to highlight Sefton and build anticipation.	Improve arrival experience and increase destination visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage audits Visitor feedback Brand exposure metrics 	✓	✓	
Place Branding & Media	Collaborate with ITV and others to create Grand National-linked content promoting Southport, Bootle and Sefton Coast.	Increase destination awareness and media reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media mentions Campaign reach Partner engagement 	✓	✓	
Business Support & Readiness	Extend The Open 2026 toolkit to Aintree, Bootle and Southport. Deliver workshops via Invest Sefton & LCR Growth Hub.	Improve business readiness and service quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of businesses supported Workshop attendance Feedback 		✓	
Bootle Visitor Experience	Promote Bootle's cultural offers incl. Salt & Tar and canal trails. Develop itineraries and trails for Grand National visitors.	Increase Bootle's visibility and visitor flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Itinerary uptake Business footfall Bootle dwell time 		✓	
Transport & Connectivity	Improve links between Aintree, Bootle & Southport incl. signage and Sandhills Station promotion.	Enhance connectivity and sustainable travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel flows Rail usage Visitor transport feedback 		✓	
Accommodation & Infrastructure	Support new hotel development at Aintree Racecourse. Position Bootle/South Sefton to support demand.	Expand visitor infrastructure and overnight stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bed stock Occupancy rates Infrastructure investment 		✓	
Strategic Place Promotion	Align GN promotions with Sefton's inward investment story. Use the event to highlight regeneration and quality of life.	Drive investment and strengthen place reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investor enquiries Campaign alignment Media coverage 	✓	✓	

Strategic Theme 2: Developing New Visitor Markets & Audiences

CORE PRIORITY 1: DEVELOP SEFTON'S DESTINATION MARKETING STRATEGY AND POSITIONING AS AN OUTSTANDING DESTINATION FOR CREATIVITY, CULTURE, WELLBEING AND RECREATION

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Integrated Campaign Delivery	Deliver integrated place marketing campaigns across digital, print and PR channels targeting regional and national short break markets. Activate Visit Southport as the lead channel and expand destination content across partner sites (e.g. Visit Liverpool, England's Golf Coast).	Strengthen market reach and awareness of Sefton's visitor offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website traffic Campaign conversion Audience segmentation 	✓	✓	
Campaign Themes & Seasonal Content	Develop destination-wide marketing content aligned with Southport's core proposition (classic coastal, heritage, family, food, events). Promote the Natural Coast and position Bootle as a Canalside hub. Create seasonal campaigns.	Improve year-round appeal and alignment to destination propositions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segment growth Repeat visits Sentiment analysis 	✓	✓	
Brand & Positioning Strategies	Develop brand and positioning strategies for Sefton's main visitor destinations and integrate with place and inward investment marketing.	Establish strong, recognisable destination brands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand recognition Media mentions Campaign alignment 	✓	✓	✓
Southport Destination Strategy	Develop a dedicated destination consumer marketing strategy for Southport to build profile and attract short break and staying visitors.	Position Southport as a lead destination brand in Sefton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor growth in 60-90 min catchment Campaign ROI 	✓	✓	
B2B Travel Trade	Develop and implement a B2B marketing strategy to grow group travel to Sefton for leisure and special interest tourism (e.g. golf, nature, walking).	Increase trade-ready product and visitor group volume.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade enquiries Itinerary uptake Sector engagement 	✓	✓	✓
MLEC & Business Tourism Strategy	Develop a B2B marketing and communications strategy positioning Southport as a coastal destination for business tourism, generating leads for MLEC opening in 2028.	Establish Southport's business events credentials ahead of MLEC launch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MLEC enquiries Business visitor stats B2B engagement 		✓	✓
Strategic Marketing Partnerships	Enhance visibility in national & international markets by exploiting key brands and associations and partnering with carriers, LVEP and neighbouring destinations.	Increase Sefton's market share in overnight and inbound markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner campaign delivery Inbound referrals Media exposure 	✓	✓	✓
Bootle Destination Brand & Marketing	Establish coherent 'always on' Bootle marketing through local partner channels and create a Canalside Bootle place brand.	Build awareness of Bootle's evolving visitor identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand recognition Online engagement Media sentiment 	✓	✓	
Bootle - Product Packaging & Partnerships	Expand itineraries and partnerships with nearby attractions (Everton FC, Aintree, NML, Western Approaches, etc) to strengthen the proposition, length of stay and new routes to market.	Deliver stronger product-market fit and partnership working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package uptake Dwell time, booking referrals 	✓	✓	
Visit Southport Website Development	Enhance Visit Southport website to serve as a multi-audience platform for consumers, travel trade and event organisers.	Improve digital experience, access to trade tools, and events promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website engagement Referral traffic Online enquiries 	✓	✓	

Strategic Theme 2: Developing New Visitor Markets & Audiences

CORE PRIORITY 2: GENERATE GREATER BENEFIT FROM CONFERENCES, BUSINESS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
MLEC Launch & Destination Repositioning	Leverage the opening of MLEC to reposition Southport and Sefton as leading coastal destinations for national business events. Coordinate bidding support, room rates and capacity building.	Establish Southport as a credible, high-quality coastal conference destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference enquiries Delegate volume Venue booking rates 	✓	✓	
Business Events Marketing & Lead Generation	Deliver a proactive B2B sales, marketing and PR strategy through Southport Convention Bureau including CRM, trade shows, familiarisation visits and ambassador development with partners such as Edgehill and Region Health Trusts/Partnerships.	Drive awareness, generate leads, and build pipeline of high-value events in target sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales conversion CRM data Pipeline value Digital engagement 	✓	✓	✓
Partnerships & Regional Collaboration	Develop strategic partnerships with LCR Convention Bureau, LVEP and MLEC venue operators (ASM Global) for joint bidding, referrals and co-investment in campaigns.	Strengthen regional presence and influence across the events ecosystem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals Campaign impact metrics Co-branded activity 	✓	✓	✓
Business Tourism Digital Platform	Launch a unified business events web platform with tailored tools for buyers and delegates - venue finder, itineraries, CRM, booking tools and sustainability credentials.	Enhance user experience and streamline enquiry management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website traffic Enquiry handling time SEO rankings 	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation & Delegate Experience	Work with developers and LegendsASM Global to ensure suitable hotel provision. Curate delegate experiences and itineraries to encourage longer stays and return visits.	Align accommodation with MICE buyer needs and enhance visitor value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serviced stock growth Average length of stay Satisfaction levels 	✓	✓	✓
Skills Development & Sector Readiness	Deliver a pre-opening skills programme across events, venue and hospitality sectors. Include sustainability training and responsible delegate practices.	Ensure the sector is equipped to meet buyer standards and deliver sustainable conferencing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training participation Quality benchmarks Net Zero adoption 	✓	✓	✓
Incentives, Pipeline & Impact Tracking	Develop targeted incentives and a subvention model to attract early conferences. Build forward pipeline through bids and ambassador development. Establish performance framework for ROI and economic impact.	Increase competitiveness, drive conversions, and evidence return on investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bid wins Economic impact Ambassador engagement Pipeline growth 	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Theme 2: Developing New Visitor Markets & Audiences

CORE PRIORITY 3: RE-ESTABLISH SOUTHPORT AS A DESTINATION FOR OUTSTANDING EVENTS

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Global Events, Global Reach	Use The Open and Grand National to elevate Southport's brand via international media, influencer engagement and satellite activity, with targeted campaigns to drive awareness, visibility and footfall.	Amplify Southport's profile on global stage and drive inbound demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing exposure PR value Footfall Brand reach 	✓	✓	✓
Town Activation & Lead-In Programming	Deliver a structured 2025-26 calendar of lead-in events linked to The Open. Focus on Lord Street, civic spaces and heritage areas with a balance of community, cultural and sporting events.	Build awareness, footfall and confidence in Southport's event delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event attendance Dwell time Community engagement. 	✓	✓	
Business & Community Readiness	Equip businesses and communities through mentoring, training and co-programming to maximise local economic impact from events.	Increase local participation and spending retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business engagement Satisfaction ratings Local spend. 	✓	✓	
Town Centre Festival & Community Events Development	Expand core festivals (Food & Drink, Comedy, Jazz etc.) into multi-venue, multi-day events. Support independent and grassroots programming to grow a diverse cultural calendar.	Broaden audience reach, enhance visitor dwell time, diversify offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor satisfaction Staying visitor volume Town Centre Event spend 	✓	✓	✓
Maximise the impact of major events	Develop a refreshed destination events strategy to grow Southport's major events portfolio, maximise the impact of the Flower Show, Air Show and Fireworks Championship, attract higher value visitors, as well as strengthen links with the town centre and local businesses.	Fully leverage the pulling power of Southport's high-profile events to generate greater profile and economic impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor satisfaction Staying visitor volume Destination event spend 	✓	✓	✓
Maximising Public Spaces	Animate key town centre assets (Victoria Park, The Atkinson, Town Hall Gardens, Market Quarter) with vibrant, creative events that celebrate local character and enhance place identity.	Strengthen town centre vibrancy and distinctiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage of public spaces Footfall Repeat visits 	✓	✓	✓
Year-Round Collaborative Programming	Coordinate a town-wide events calendar with partners. Streamline licensing/funding, develop shared marketing assets and promote collaborative planning.	Ensure coherent delivery and maximise return on event investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events delivered Partner engagement Occupancy uplift 	✓	✓	✓
Reposition Southport's Cultural Identity	Align MLEC and The Atkinson programming, attract touring exhibitions and position Southport in regional cultural strategies with partners like Culture Liverpool and NML.	Establish Southport as a recognised cultural destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural attendance Partnership success Visitor segmentation 	✓	✓	✓
Strategic Bidding & Event Infrastructure	Work with LCR CA to attract regionally significant events through strategic bids and secure long-term investment in infrastructure and event capability.	Drive economic impact and embed Southport in regional delivery models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bid success rate Events hosted Infrastructure investment 		✓	✓

Strategic Theme 3: Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness

CORE PRIORITY 1: SIGNATURE PROJECTS FOR REVITALISING SOUTHPORT AS A YEAR-ROUND MAGNET FOR COASTAL TOURISM THROUGH INVESTMENT IN ESSENTIAL VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITIES

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Southport Seafront Investment	Transform the seafront into a distinctive, high-quality year-round visitor experience anchored by Regional Attractions, reimagined as a regionally significant leisure attraction alongside Splash World and Kings Gardens. Regenerate Southport Pier as a nationally recognised waterfront destination with public realm improvements, new commercial opportunities and cultural programming. Enhance the Marine Lake through a continuous circular path, a designated 'Marine Beach,' and upgraded visitor amenities. Supported by investable business cases and integrated land use/delivery frameworks.	Increase destination competitiveness and strengthen Southport's year round visitor economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor satisfaction Visitor spend Length of stay; Investment secured (public/private) New product development 	✓	✓	✓
Lord Street Revitalisation	Elevate Lord Street's appeal as a cultural, retail and hospitality destination by improving the tenant mix (national brands and independents), enhancing the quality of public realm and clustering animation and events around key civic spaces such as The Atkinson and Princess Dianna Memorial Gardens. Support wider regeneration initiatives to increase local visitor spend by encouraging residential use of upper floors through 'Lord Street Living'	Improve visitor experience, attract higher value markets and increase dwell time/footfall within the town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centre footfall Retail occupancy Business mix Event attendance 		✓	✓
Victoria Park & Events Infrastructure	Reposition Victoria Park as Southport's flagship venue for outdoor events and a southern gateway to the town. Develop infrastructure, attract national profile events and extend the Flower Show's legacy through interpretation and seasonal planting. Explore options for a community/events hub and integrate with the wider visitor offer via improved connectivity and a long-term investment strategy.	Reinforce Southport's role as a nationally recognised events destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event attendance Commercial bookings Infrastructure upgrades Victoria Park usage 	✓	✓	✓
The Atkinson as a Cultural Anchor	Strengthen The Atkinson's role on Lord Street through capital investment, upgraded theatre and museum programming, partnerships with national institutions, and enhanced digital content. Expand its audience base, attract national touring exhibitions, and support wider town centre footfall. Connect with business tourism and local events programming to reinforce Southport's cultural credentials.	Increase cultural engagement and support year-round visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibition attendance Audience diversity Capital investment Cultural programming 	✓	✓	✓
Diversified Accommodation Development	Deliver a targeted investment strategy to grow Southport's accommodation offer, from guesthouses and branded hotels to non-serviced lodges and motorhome provision. Focus on supporting key regeneration opportunities (MLEC, Adventure Coast) and address quality and planning issues in key locations. Align planning and development incentives with Sefton's Hotel Strategy and Southport's wider growth model.	Grow higher value staying markets and support off-peak economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedstock growth Hotel occupancy Visitor spend Planning consents Investor interest 	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Theme 3: Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness

CORE PRIORITY 2: UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF THE SEFTON COAST AS A DISTINCTIVE NATURAL TOURISM ASSET BY INVESTING IN HIGH-QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE, ENHANCING KEY GATEWAYS, IMPROVING ACCESS, SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION, WHILE SAFEGUARDING AND CONSERVING ITS UNIQUE AND SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Crosby Coastal Park	Position Crosby Coastal Park as a flagship coastal destination, using its blend of public art (e.g. Another Place), heritage and nature to attract higher-value visitors. Invest in welcome infrastructure, signage, and interpretation. Support gardens, arts-led activations and future visitor facilities (e.g. sculpture trails, boutique accommodation). Improve year-round access, public transport, food/drink offer, and link existing assets (Lake House, adventure centre) into new wellness and activity packages.	Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness / Diversifying and Spreading the Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor numbers (Crosby) Average dwell time Business mix Seasonal visitor spread 	✓	✓	
Sefton Coastal Path	Establish a high-quality, accessible Sefton Coastal Path as the spine of the Natural Coast. Improve signage, surfacing, links to Merseyrail, and gateways at Southport Esplanade, Ainsdale and Marshside. Commission an updated access strategy, improve active travel and promote walking, cycling and wildlife experiences. Refresh branding, wayfinding and family-friendly trail infrastructure.	Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness / Destination Stewardship and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path quality/accessibility Green travel modes Trail usage Sefton Natural Coast brand perception 	✓	✓	
National Trust Formby	Support Formby as a nationally significant gateway for nature-based tourism and conservation, while easing pressure on the dunes through sustainable transport, shuttle trials, and integrated visitor hubs. Finalise car park improvements and strengthen interpretation, access and nature trails. Explore feasibility of a new visitor centre and limited eco-accommodation, subject to SSSI constraints.	Destination Stewardship and Sustainability / Spreading the Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peak pressure Visitor satisfaction, Merseyrail-linked visits Green travel options 		✓	
Ainsdale-on-Sea	Regenerate Ainsdale-on-Sea as a high-quality eco-tourism hub. Prioritise capital upgrades to Shore Road, visitor amenities and walking/cycling infrastructure. Masterplan brownfield sites (e.g. Pontins, Toad Hall) for mixed-use eco-tourism development including accommodation. Improve connections to Formby/Southport and align trails and interpretation with National Trail standards.	Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness / Diversifying the Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation pipeline Coastal visitor spread/dispersal Infrastructure investment 		✓	✓
RSPB Marshside	Position Marshside as a northern gateway for nature tourism, walking and wildlife experiences. Reopen and steward the former sand-winning site in partnership with RSPB for viewing, learning and low-impact facilities. Improve trail condition and signage to Southport and Plough roundabout. Promote eco-learning, seasonal events and low-carbon infrastructure.	Spreading the Offer / Sustainable Destination Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor satisfaction Nature based tourism impact Interpretation coverage 		✓	

Strategic Theme 3: Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness

CORE PRIORITY 3: ESTABLISH BOOTLE AS A VIBRANT AND CONNECTED VISITOR DESTINATION BY BUILDING ON CULTURE-LED REGENERATION AT THE STRAND AND SALT & TAR, ACTIVATING THE LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL AS A KEY CULTURAL AND NATURAL CORRIDOR CONNECTING LIVERPOOL'S WATERFRONT AND SEFTON'S GREEN SPACES. INVESTMENT SHOULD CAPITALISE ON BOOTLE'S MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE, SUPPORT INDEPENDENT VENUES AND ALIGN WITH NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE A DISTINCTIVE AND VIBRANT TOWN CENTRE OFFER.

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
The Strand Redevelopment & Canal-Side Public Realm	Deliver Levelling UpTown Deal-funded regeneration of The Strand as a vibrant, mixed-use town centre integrating leisure, culture and retail. Use this to catalyse high-quality canal-side improvements including events space, food/drink pop-ups and active public realm along Washington Parade.	Enhancing Strength of Place and Competitiveness/ Spreading the Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Footfall Retail mix Public realm improvements 		✓	
Carolina Basin Feasibility & Mixed-Use Development	Complete feasibility for Carolina Basin as a new visitor and enterprise anchor. Assess potential for workspace, heritage interpretation, and commercial uses linked to the canal and Bootle town centre. Position to attract private/public investment and stimulate town centre vibrancy.	Enhancing Strength of Place/ Diversifying the Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project pipeline Investment secured Workspace availability 			✓
Bootle Canal Events Activation	Build a creative events programme along the canal corridor including festivals, floating markets, public art and temporary activations. Align with Salt & Tar branding and support independent traders and grassroots participation.	Diversifying and Spreading the Offer/Marketing & Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event volume Audience reach Spend uplift Trader participation 	✓	✓	
Salt & Tar (Phase 2) – Cultural Venue	Progress development of a permanent cultural venue at Salt & Tar to host performances, exhibitions and live events. Strengthen year-round programming and integrate with Bootle's wider creative infrastructure.	Enhancing Place Identity/ Sustainable Destination Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venue capacity Event programme Cultural audience growth 		✓	
Leeds & Liverpool Canal Heritage Trail & Access Strategy	Develop a canal-wide access and storytelling strategy from Bootle to Sefton Coast. Improve surfacing, signage, and lighting; use public art, interpretation and digital storytelling to highlight Bootle's dockland heritage. Create a fully connected canal corridor for walking, cycling and exploration.	Enhancing Connectivity/ Destination Stewardship & Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail usage Digital engagement Heritage visitor satisfaction 	✓	✓	
Military Heritage Trails & Digital Interpretation	Establish heritage walking trails across Bootle linking wartime and civic sites with layered interpretation, AR/audio content and co-produced storytelling. Position for heritage, education and culture audiences.	Enhancing Place Identity/ Product Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail engagement Digital interaction Community participation 		✓	
Accommodation & Overnight Offer	Explore opportunities for small-scale accommodation including canal-side stays and boutique offers. Target business and event-linked visitor markets connected to Liverpool, Aintree, and cultural programming. Align with wider Sefton Accommodation Strategy.	Supply-Side Investment/ Attracting Staying Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bedstock Occupancy rates Product diversification 		✓	✓

Strategic Theme 4: Being Intelligence Led & Market Focussed

CORE PRIORITY: ADOPT INTEGRATED, DATA-DRIVEN INTELLIGENCE TO INFORM GROWTH, MARKETING AND INVESTMENT FOR SEFTON'S VISITOR ECONOMY

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Visitor Research & Insight Programme	Commission annual visitor research to capture visitor satisfaction, behaviours, sentiment and motivations. Integrate Mosaic segmentation and STEAM/UKCAMS to build granular profiles of existing and emerging audiences.	Marketing & Audience Development through smarter use of Intelligence & measure of ROI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor satisfaction Segmentation Profiling/Reach Repeat visits 	✓	✓	✓
Optimise Existing Data Platforms (STR, STEAM, Beauclair)	Maximise value of existing datasets (e.g. STR, STEAM, Beauclair, UKCAMS) by improving participation, data quality, regularity and integration into planning and operations. Use STR/Co Star to benchmark occupancy, ADR and RevPAR across comparator sets.	Supply-Side improvement due to enhanced intelligence & ROI forecasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupancy trends ADR forecasting RevPAR Benchmarks & Comparator analysis 	✓	✓	✓
Real-Time Visitor Behaviour & Movement Tracking	Use mobile location and footfall data (e.g. Beauclair, Wi-Fi sensors) to monitor dwell time, movement patterns and visitor origins across priority locations to inform site management and experience design.	Improved audience insight & market led product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Footfall by site and visitor type Dwell time & usage Origin mapping Visitor profile insights 		✓	
Social Listening & Sentiment Analysis	Track brand perception and experience quality using sentiment analysis from review platforms and social media channels. Support destination marketing, reputation management and service improvement.	Improved audience insight & market led product development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net promoter scores Sentiment ratings 	✓	✓	
National & International Data Integration	Align local insights with VisitBritain, ONS, IPS and domestic survey data to benchmark Sefton's performance against national trends and inform strategic alignment.	Improved understanding of national trends and policy influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National market penetration rates & segments Destination benchmarking 	✓	✓	✓
Forecasting & Predictive Analytics	Explore tools such as Tableau, Power BI and Looker Studio to develop dashboards for forecasting, scenario planning, and identifying trends in demand, spend and behaviours.	Strategic Planning to support resilience & growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecast accuracy Data utilisation rate Uptake of AI modelling & insight tools 	✓	✓	
Socio-Economic Impact Monitoring	Track wider social, environmental and economic indicators including accessibility, inclusivity and business performance to support holistic understanding of the visitor economy's contribution.	Inclusive Growth/ROI & strengthened local policy Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply side performance measures/data Inclusive visitor metrics Business sentiment analysis 	✓		

Strategic Theme 5: Environmental Sustainability & Competitiveness

CORE PRIORITY: ESTABLISH SEFTON AS A LEADING COASTAL DESTINATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Destination Accreditation & Recognition	Use frameworks like the GDS-Index and People, Planet, Places to work towards accredited destination status for Southport and the Sefton Coast. Encourage collaboration with Green Tourism and wider accreditation schemes (e.g. Green Key, ISO 14001) to benchmark sustainability performance across tourism infrastructure.	Resilience & Competitiveness/ Profile & Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation status Sustainability scores Number of certified venues 	✓		
Business Support & Carbon Reduction	Provide tailored support for businesses to implement low-carbon improvements (e.g. LED lighting, insulation, heating), access LCR Net Zero funding, and navigate planning guidance for heritage/conservation areas.	Supply-Side Improvement towards Net Zero Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business carbon reduction measures Uptake of low carbon grants 	✓	✓	
Waste Reduction & Circular Economy	Promote initiatives such as Plastic Free Communities, Refill, and zero-waste networks to reduce single-use plastics and event-related waste. Embed sustainable procurement in supplier policies and event planning.	Uptake in trade awareness & participation in responsible tourism initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % plastic-free venues/events Waste reduction rates 	✓		
Sustainable Transport & Active Travel	Align with LCR Local Transport Plan to improve public transport and active travel infrastructure (e.g. walking and cycling links to Southport and the Sefton Coast), supporting modal shift and carbon reduction.	Reduced environmental impact of visitors through improved connectivity & access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport modal share Active travel usage 		✓	
Skills & Training for Sustainability	Promote accredited training for businesses including Green Tourism Training, Carbon Literacy for Tourism and Zero Carbon Business. Explore local delivery via Southport College and Sefton@Work.	Workforce development supporting climate awareness & skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of businesses trained Training completion rates 	✓		
Green Tourism Charter & Events Standards	Develop a Sefton Sustainable Tourism Charter aligned with the Glasgow Declaration and ISO 20121 green event standards. Provide local guidance for energy, waste and supply chain planning for event organisers.	Improved environmental standards through business participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charter sign-ups ISO 20121 uptake 	✓	✓	
Recognition & Awards	Encourage entries into LCR Tourism Awards (Ethical & Sustainable category) and explore a local Sefton Sustainability Award to promote good practice and market Sefton as a responsible destination.	Profile raising through industry leadership & increased participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of award entries/winners 	✓		
Heritage Coast & Nature Protection	Support ambitions to achieve Heritage Coast designation for Sefton, using it to guide sustainable visitor management, conservation priorities and protect the landscape's character.	Improved place Stewardship through integrated/coordinated environmental management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designation status Conservation area KPIs New investment secured 		✓	
Alignment with Net Zero Targets & Funding	Ensure all activity contributes to UK 2050 and LCR 2040 Net Zero targets. Support business access to funds including UKSPF, Levelling Up Fund and Growth Platform Net Zero programmes.	Increased investment, policy alignment & increased brand awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund access rates Carbon reduction impact Positive destination brand association 	✓	✓	

Strategic Theme 6: Enabling Growth through Supply-Side Investment & Improvement

CORE PRIORITY 1: DEVELOP A SKILLED, MOTIVATED AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE THAT DRIVES SERVICE QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY AND SECTOR GROWTH

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Local Training Partnerships	Coordinate with Southport College, Hugh Baird and other providers to deliver pre-employment training, CPD and apprenticeships. Leverage new programmes in digital, leadership and management to improve productivity, customer service and long term progression routes into supervisory and middle-management roles.	Development of a skilled and inclusive workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training participation Employer satisfaction Progression rates 	✓	✓	
Service Excellence Standards	Promote national training schemes like Welcome to Excellence and City & Guilds Welcome Host to raise baseline service standards and encourage consistent visitor experiences across hospitality, retail and events.	Enhanced service quality and visitor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer satisfaction Repeat visits Training uptake 	✓	✓	
Recruitment & Progression Pathways	Deliver Skills Bootcamps and the Hospitality Passport with DWP and local employers. Design clear recruitment campaigns and progression frameworks that encourage retention and upskilling of staff into specialist or leadership roles across the sector.	Improved recruitment and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job creation Recruitment success Career progression 	✓	✓	
'Sefton Welcome' & Multi-skilling	Use The Open and other major events to promote a coordinated 'Sefton Welcome' CPD offer. Encourage businesses to adopt year round, cross sector employment models, enabling multi-skilling across tourism, hospitality, retail and events to improve resilience and productivity.	Strengthened year-round employment and productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment levels Seasonal balance Skills development/uptake 	✓	✓	✓
Inclusion & Careers Awareness	Champion participation in the LCR Fair Employment Charter and outreach to schools via the Southport Learning Trust. Support careers education, targeting underrepresented groups and embedding tourism pathways into the curriculum and decision-point guidance.	Broaden participation and workforce diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce diversity Awareness levels Skills engagement 	✓	✓	
Funding & Signposting	Promote use of the Youth Guarantee, apprenticeship levy transfers and devolved adult skills funding. Improve employer signposting through Be More, college platforms and business networks to maximise take up and support employer led training.	Enhance access to training and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding uptake Platform engagement Programme access 	✓	✓	

Strategic Theme 6: Enabling Growth through Supply-Side Investment & Improvement

CORE PRIORITY 2: DEVELOP INTEGRATED BUSINESS SUPPORT THAT STRENGTHENS RESILIENCE, PRODUCTIVITY, SERVICE QUALITY AND YEAR-ROUND COMPETITIVENESS

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Resilience & Growth Programme	Deliver structured business support including 360° diagnostics, mentoring, Net Zero audits and access to finance workshops (via LCR Finance Hub) to help businesses manage costs, build resilience and plan for long-term growth.	Strengthened business resilience & growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Engagement Growth Rates Funding Uptake 	✓	✓	✓
Sector-Specific & Scale-Up Support	Expand tailored support for hospitality, retail, attractions and events via consultancy on pricing, packaging and readiness. Link growth-ready firms to the LCR Growth Programme and enhance engagement through networking and peer events.	Enhanced productivity of businesses & sector competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business confidence Growth programme access Peer engagement 	✓	✓	
Year-Round Product & Marketing	Promote bundled experiences and multi-day itineraries with DMO partners. Encourage participation in VisitBritain campaigns and offer digital marketing workshops to support visibility and seasonality reduction.	Enhanced competitiveness and seasonality balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign participation Marketing reach Off-peak visits 	✓	✓	✓
Workforce Quality & Inclusivity	Strengthen partnerships with training providers and increase uptake of customer service and accessibility training (e.g. Welcome to Excellence, VE Inclusive Tourism Toolkit) to improve quality and inclusivity across the visitor economy.	Raised service standards and inclusive employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training uptake Customer feedback Participation rates 	✓	✓	
Infrastructure & Business Advocacy	Coordinate input into regeneration, safety and destination management through strengthened business networks via Invest Sefton, Marketing Southport and LCR Growth Hub. Enable collective advocacy around town centre infrastructure and public realm priorities.	Improved operating environment and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy impact Business participation Levels of engagement 	✓	✓	✓
Funding & Investment Partnerships	Maximise investment through UKSPF, Growth Hub contracts and co-funded support schemes. Position the visitor economy for greater investment by building partnerships with national, regional and local stakeholders.	Increased access to external funding and leverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Funding secured Partnership activity Investment leveraged 	✓	✓	
Signposting & Communications	Create a dedicated visitor economy business support toolkit mapping services to core business challenges. Improve awareness of LCR Growth Hub, VisitBritain tools and wider support through comms channels and partner platforms.	Improved awareness and access to business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit downloads Web traffic Business satisfaction 	✓	✓	

Strategic Theme 6: Enabling Growth through Supply-Side Investment & Improvement

CORE PRIORITY 3: STRENGTHEN TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY TO UNLOCK GROWTH, IMPROVE ACCESS AND SUPPORT A SUSTAINABLE VISITOR ECONOMY

AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	SHORT	MED	LONG
Burscough Curves & Strategic Links	Build the case for reopening the Burscough Curves by evidencing demand from target visitor markets and economic uplift from direct links to Preston, the West Coast Main Line, Lake District and Scotland. Align with LCR Local Transport Plan and Southport's wider investment narrative.	Access to new visitor markets & regional connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rail access Visitor spend Investment leverage 		✓	✓
Rail Service Performance	Lobby Northern Rail for improved reliability and frequency of services to Southport, supported by data on visitor economy dependency, seasonal flows and future growth forecasts.	Enhanced access & travel experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journey reliability Passenger satisfaction Rail usage 	✓	✓	
Visitor-Focused Rail Ticketing	Promote themed rail tickets, joint discounts and express service links across Liverpool-Bootle-Southport corridor. Include visitor-facing branding and directional signage to support seamless travel and wider dispersal across coastal destinations.	Increased rail use and reduced car dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ticket sales Visitor dispersal rates from regional centres Modal shift to rail 	✓	✓	
Transport Integration & Promotion	Improve coordination between Merseyrail and Northern Rail services through joint digital ticketing, enhanced visitor information and integrated promotion. Pilot coordinated travel campaigns for The Open 2026 to promote long-term model for event-linked and seasonal visitor travel.	Increased modal shift and event readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign uptake Ticketing integration Event related usage 	✓	✓	
Eco-Tourism & Active Travel Links	Upgrade station facilities to support eco-tourism through enhanced bike hire, storage and links to Sefton Coast Path. Support cross-station drop-off options and signage for nature-based travel.	Integration of sustainable travel and eco-tourism in promotion & visitor offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station facilities audit Cycle hire use Coastal visitor footfall 	✓	✓	
Southport Station Refurbishment	Prioritise refurbishment of Southport station to reflect the town's visitor role. Use VE strategy forecasts to position the station as a key gateway supporting investment and improving first impressions.	Strengthened first impressions and gateway experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment case submitted Station satisfaction Visitor spend 		✓	✓
Sefton Coast Main Line Identity	Explore rebranding the rail line as the 'Sefton Coast/Natural Coast Main Line' to strengthen its identity as a visitor route, aid marketing of coastal destinations and improve visitor recognition of access routes.	Enhanced visibility and use of public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branding campaign uptake Passenger awareness 		✓	✓

MEASURING PROGRESS



Tracking Outcomes and Driving Performance

Delivery of this strategy will be underpinned by a robust performance management framework, coordinated by Sefton’s Tourism Department as the designated DMO. Drawing on both local and national datasets, an agreed set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to monitor progress against the strategy’s priorities, inform investment decisions and report outcomes to partners including the DMO Partnership, Sefton Council and other partner organisations including the Liverpool City Region Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

KPI data will be published quarterly (where feasible), shared with key delivery groups, and used to inform local, regional and national research programmes. This will include STEAM visitor volume and value estimates, hotel and attractions performance data and local segmentation analysis. It will also support regional and national benchmarking initiatives, alongside locally agreed business performance targets such as environmental standards and employment outcomes. These insights will be critical to refining delivery, evidencing impact and driving continuous improvement across Sefton’s visitor economy.

The table below provides a condensed summary of the full set of KPIs and performance measures outlined in the strategy. Six consolidated headings are used to reflect the breadth of data that will be captured and reported, ensuring alignment with the strategy’s programmes, objectives and intended outcomes.

KPI THEME	KEY INDICATORS/MEASURES	DATA SOURCES	FREQUENCY	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ALIGNMENT
Satisfaction & Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor ratings TIC experience Digital sentiment 	Visitor surveys, social listening	Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase annual direct visitor spend by 30%, with Southport as the leading attractor in the LCR. Achieve national recognition for the Sefton Coast through at least three major awards or eco-tourism metrics.
Economic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor volumes Spend per head FTE jobs ADR & occupancy rates 	STEAM, hotel data, footfall analytics, Sefton@Work	Quarterly/ Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow overnight stays by 25% and raise occupancy rates to 85%, reducing seasonality.
Sustainability & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident satisfaction Net Zero & quality accreditations Jobs & business support 	Local surveys, certifiers, Invest Sefton	Quarterly/ Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure £150 million in new investment and grow or enhance 25 sustainable tourism businesses. Embed tourism in local regeneration by engaging communities and stakeholders annually in delivery.
DMO & Organisational Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership growth (Marketing Southport) Commercial income B2B enquiries 	DMO CRM, partnerships & sales tracking	Quarterly/ Annual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase annual direct visitor spend by 30%, with Southport as the leading attractor in the LCR. Grow overnight stays by 25% and raise occupancy rates to 85%, reducing seasonality. Embed tourism in local regeneration by engaging communities and stakeholders annually in delivery.
Marketing & Audience Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web traffic Campaign ROI Partner Engagement PR & social reach 	Analytics, media monitoring, campaign data	Monthly/ Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase annual direct visitor spend by 30%, with Southport as the leading attractor in the LCR. Grow overnight stays by 25% and raise occupancy rates to 85%, reducing seasonality.
Intelligence & Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI usage Predictive accuracy based on data inputs Segmentation growth 	CRM, campaign analysis, digital tools	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase annual direct visitor spend by 30%, with Southport as the leading attractor in the LCR. Grow overnight stays by 25% and raise occupancy rates to 85%, reducing seasonality.

The use of AI, predictive analytics and real time sentiment analysis will be expanded throughout the lifetime of this strategy, alongside more integrated use of existing platforms like STEAM, STR and Beauclair. As set out in Theme 4 (section 5), combining national intelligence with local research and innovation will enable more responsive marketing, sharper segmentation and stronger evidence-based investment decisions across Sefton’s visitor economy.

UNLOCKING GROWTH



Unlocking Growth Through Targeted Investment

Delivering this strategy’s ambitions will require a robust and clearly articulated approach to investment. Sefton’s visitor economy has a strong track record of leveraging public and private funding to support major capital and revenue projects ranging from infrastructure and place activation to business support and destination marketing.

Looking ahead, success will depend on the ability to position the strategy’s priorities within wider investment frameworks at local, regional and national levels. This includes aligning with funding programmes from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA), VisitEngland/VisitBritain, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, and private sector partners.

This strategy provides the rationale, structure and performance framework needed to guide future business cases and maximise return on investment (ROI). By connecting clear objectives and outcomes to evidence-based interventions, Marketing Southport as the DMO can confidently advocate for investment that delivers measurable economic, social and environmental impact.

Making the Case: Framing ROI & Priorities

Each of the six strategic themes outlined in this strategy provides a foundation for ROI-led business cases, whether through town centre regeneration, gateway infrastructure, events programming or skills and business support. The table below summarises how these themes align with different types of investment opportunity, and where funding could be sourced from.

Strategic Investment Framework

THEME	INDICATIVE FOCUS AREAS	LEAD / KEY PARTNERS	INDICATIVE FUNDING SOURCES
Building Sefton’s Attract Brand	Borough-wide marketing strategy, content plan and activation campaign; destination welcome packages for The Open and The Grand National.	Marketing Southport (DMO), Sefton Council, LVEP, VisitBritain, Event Partners	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, VisitBritain, Commercial Partners
Extending Reach & Building New Audiences	Digital-first campaigns, visitor data and segmentation tools, co-branded event marketing and promotion of Southport’s conference and group travel offer.	Sefton Council, DMO, LVEP, ASM Global, Growth Platform	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, VisitBritain, Private Sector
Enhancing Strength of Place & Competitiveness	Investment in Bootle Canalside and Carolina Basin, Salt & Tar, Southport seafront, town centre and accommodation. Coastal infrastructure at Crosby, Ainsdale and Marshside.	Sefton Council, DMO, Canal & River Trust, Arts & Coast Partnerships	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, DEFRA, National Lottery, Private Sector
Strengthening the Year-Round Offer	Seasonal events strategy, cultural and legacy programmes linked to The Open, and new wellness, nature and sustainability-based experiences.	DMO, Sefton Council, Cultural & Health Partners, Event Promoters	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, National Lottery, VisitBritain
Driving Value Through Partnerships & Investment	Establishment of DMO and Bootle Pride in Place governance model, investment prospectus, SME support, skills, low carbon and readiness programmes.	Sefton Council, DMO, InvestSefton, Sefton@Work, Growth Hub	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, NW Net Zero, Climate Action Fund VisitBritain, National Lottery, Private Sector
Creating the Conditions for Growth	Strategic infrastructure projects including Sefton Coastal Path access and interpretation, improved regional transport connectivity and visitor dispersal from Liverpool and mainline rail hubs, delivery of a Local Visitor Transport Strategy covering road access, parking, cycle hire and all-abilities routes, and investment in digital visitor infrastructure such as AI, CRM and analytics to enhance planning and experience.	Sefton Council, LCRCA, Natural England, National Trust, Network Rail, Transport & Data Partners	Sefton Council, LCR Combined Authority, DEFRA, VisitBritain, Commercial Partners

This framework supports a more joined-up approach to project development and funding bids, one that is firmly grounded in the strategic priorities, market intelligence and delivery models outlined throughout the strategy.

What We’ll Do

- Develop ROI logic models for all major project proposals, aligned to the six strategic themes.
- Position Sefton’s visitor economy projects within LCRCA investment pipelines (e.g. SIF, skills, transport).
- Strengthen links to national funding programmes and innovation pilots (e.g. VisitBritain, Arts Council, Net Zero)
- Support local partners and businesses in identifying and applying for funding aligned to shared priorities.
- Use KPI frameworks and case studies to evidence the impact of previous investment and support future cases.
- Expand Marketing Southport’s role in coordinating investment pipelines and supporting business case development.

