

Destination Management Plan | 2024 - 2029

VISIT SOLIHULL



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Executive Summary

The **Visit Solihull Destination Management Plan** (DMP) sets out Solihull's priorities for boosting tourism over the next five years. The DMP has been developed through close coordination with partners in industry. This includes a newly-formed Tourism Stakeholder Group, which brings together individuals and organisations representing sub-sectors of the tourism industry who have helped shape and prioritise key activities.

The DMP follows best practice guidance set out in the Government's de Bois Review (2021) as well as advice from Visit England on effective Destination Management Planning.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a severe impact on businesses, residents and visitors to the borough, the Council has been working closely with partners such as the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) to support the Tourism sector and capitalise on opportunities following the Commonwealth Games. Data from the borough shows that these efforts have been paying off: Solihull's pandemic recovery has been positive, with visitor numbers **rising by more than 200,000** from 5.16 million in 2019 to 5.82 million in 2022.

Solihull's tourism sector was worth **£1.1 billion** in the year 2021/22¹. Just under 50% of visitors come to Solihull for retail, with 15% for food and drink and 10% for recreation. These trends have helped shape the key priorities for the Visit Solihull Destination Management Plan.

Our DMP focuses on **four key priorities** that were raised during consultations with key stakeholders and focus groups. These are to improve how the borough is packaged, retain more local spend, improve the visitor experience and support businesses in the tourism sector.

¹ Appendix I: The Economic Impact of the Visitor Economy Solihull

Vision

Opportunity, Connections, Lifestyle

Solihull, your destination of choice for business, leisure, events and high-quality retail – find everything you need.

Centrally located in the heart of the Midlands- we are the gateway for regional, national and international visitors, boasting unrivalled transport links and world class exhibition space. Receive a warm welcome at one of our luxury hotels, bars and restaurants, enjoy walking or cycling around our 16 Green Flag accredited parks and countryside, discover independent businesses with your family and friends and explore our heritage – Solihull is the ‘Town in the Country’.

Our five-year vision is for Solihull to create memorable experiences for visitors and residents. We aim to deliver outstanding experiences and transform people’s perceptions of our culturally diverse and vibrant area, building a sustainable and inclusive future for Solihull.

“We are a borough that prides itself as being the best place to live, work and spend leisure time, with an outstanding reputation for sustainable economic growth, investment and innovation. This is illustrated by our ambitious masterplan for the town centre, alongside other towns and local centres – creating exciting opportunities for leisure, business and culture.”



Introduction

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) provides a roadmap for supporting the future development of Solihull's visitor economy. We have identified four priorities with deliverable actions to assist in raising greater awareness of Solihull's tourism offer. Overall, we plan to grow the total number of visitors by promoting the area as an attractive leisure destination for domestic and international consumer and travel trade markets, and by effectively collaborating with our Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

The plan has been developed by Visit Solihull in collaboration with key partners in the visitor economy. It has reviewed the performance of the sector, how it has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how we intend to support continued recovery and growth.

A review of the tourism delivery landscape in England was commissioned by the Government in March 2021. The de Bois Review examined the role, structure, and performance of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and highlighted concerns about the structure, funding, and fragmentation of the DMO landscape. The review's recommendations largely align with what is already in place in the West Midlands. The West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) acts as the strategic regional 'hub' with city and Borough DMOs acting as 'spokes.' The DMO function for Solihull is served by the Visit Solihull Team.

The de Bois Review recommended that England's DMO landscape should be restructured into a tiered formation, to create a national portfolio of high performing and strategic destination organisations. These new Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP) are currently being accredited and Solihull is a partner in the Birmingham, Solihull, and Black Country (BSBC) LVEP. A top tier of Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) was also recommended, the first pilot of which has been designated in the North East.

Alignment with Solihull Economic Strategy 2023-2032

The Visit Solihull DMP will support the key themes of the Solihull Economic Strategy, with actions identified that support each of the four key areas as follows:

Theme A: A vibrant business economy

Supporting Actions: Business support for the hospitality industry and strengthening our business tourism offering.

- Working closely with Business Growth West Midlands to identify business support needs and challenges to the sector.
- Using Tourism Forum to support businesses with local opportunities.
- Creating opportunities for local supply chain.
- Using the Cultural Tourism Group, Tourism Forum and Visit Solihull Key Stakeholder Tourism Steering Group to identify ongoing support.

Theme B: Great opportunities for everyone

Supporting Actions: Identify the skills gap and supporting with jobs fairs, with the Employability and Skills Team.

- Using established forums to identify skills gaps.
- Working closely with the Employment and Skills Team.
- Solihull Council to be in alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan. (LSIP)²



² Appendix 2: Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) and local skills improvement fund (LSIF) GOV.UK Policy Paper

Theme C: A sustainable economy

Supporting Actions: Sustainable tourism to attract new target audiences and support Solihull's sustainability ambitions.

- Support Solihull's businesses to decarbonise their activities.
- Signposting SMEs to free energy audits and grants with the support of Business Growth West Midlands (BGWM).
- Better promotion of low carbon alternatives to businesses, that are linked to Social Value.
- Promotion of the extensive roll out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the Borough for visitors.
- Deliver skills to support the growth of the low carbon sector with the support of our Sustainability Team and Business Growth West Midlands (BGWM).
- Working with Sustainability Team to benchmark Solihull Council's position as part of the Global Destination Sustainability Index Movement (GDSM).
- Work across Solihull Council to maximise opportunities for climate change adaptation and circular economy.
- Support and encourage both retrofit in residential and commercial buildings, and sustainable construction.
- Support the development of local area energy networks to meet the needs of new developments in the borough.
- Explore the role of large businesses as custodians of large landholders and significant assets.

Theme D: Thriving places

Supporting Actions: Place making and pride of place for the local community, looking at public art and markets to encourage more dwell time in our towns and local centres.

- Anti-graffiti task force
- Supporting Arts and Cultures Team with strategy for the borough.

Solihull's Tourism Landscape

Solihull Town Centre is served by the Solihull BID (Business Improvement District) team. Solihull BID is one of the leading BIDs in the region. The next ballot is for the period 2025 to 2029.

Solihull BID looks at Town Centre events, supporting the retail and commercial businesses with increased footfall into the High Street and employee benefits which includes discounts in the Town Centre businesses. Solihull BID is included in Visit Solihull's key stakeholder groups. A collaborative strategy for the Town Centre will be developed between partners in 2024.



In addition, Solihull Council and the Visit Solihull team will promote key assets in the Town Centre to help drive footfall, including the retail offer at Touchwood Shopping Centre and Mell Square and community events.

As with Solihull Town Centre, the Visit Solihull team will work with key partners like Visit Knowle, Shirley Ambassadors group, Solihull BID and other internal Council colleagues to develop and promote the USPs of smaller towns and local centres to create an individual strategy for public art, heritage, high streets and public realm.

Visit Solihull also plans to work with key strategic partners in the private sector, including gateways like Birmingham Airport and train stations to enhance wayfinding and information for points of interest and maps.

Solihull sits geographically between Coventry, who were City of Culture between 2021–2022, and Birmingham, who were put on the international stage as the host of the Commonwealth Games 2022. Solihull has strong transport links with Birmingham Airport, Birmingham International train station and Solihull train station, with quick access to some of the UK's major motorways.

Solihull has a strong offering for business visitors with two major business parks in the borough, Blythe Valley Business Park and Birmingham Business Park, with strong conference and events facilities on site. The borough hosts Resorts World, the NEC Campus and the National Conference Centre, with a strong retail, hospitality and events offering. Solihull has travel trade-ready assets³ which include Bear Grylls Adventure, Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens, Hampton Manor Hotel, the National Motorcycle Museum, and the Jaguar Land Rover Experience.



We are looking at the potential of becoming an AR (Augmented reality) destination and using technology like VR (Virtual Reality) to create interactive experiences for visitors and residents of the borough. This will be greatly enhanced with the prospect of 5G

³ Appendix 3: Make It West Midlands Travel Trade Guide

technology, which Solihull is pioneering in. As such, there are plans in motion for a UK Telecoms lab in the borough. This state-of-the-art facility will contribute to helping Solihull businesses, residents and visitors to realise the full economic and societal potential benefits of 5G.

In relation to Tourism, 5G technology can support destinations to attract visitors and benefit from the increase in connectivity and newer technologies including:

- Virtual Reality (VR)
- Augmented Reality (AR)
- Mixed Reality (MR)
- The internet of things (IoT)
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Autonomous Vehicles

The Visit Solihull brand developed during the Commonwealth Games, maximising the opportunity for the industry coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. New groups have been established, including a Tourism Stakeholder Group, made up of strategic businesses and partners in the local visitor economy, which has led the formation of this plan. In addition, a cultural tourism group has been set up to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the forefront of any ongoing Tourism Strategy.

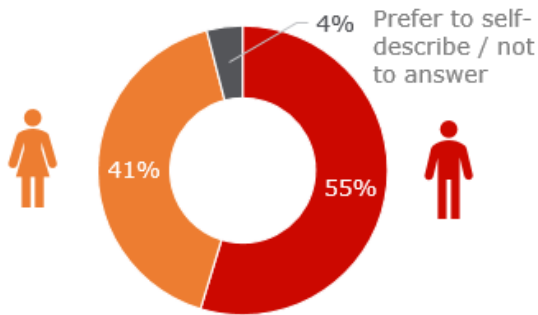
The well-established Tourism Forum and the Shirley Ambassador groups will continue to provide input into the work in future, with a focus on towns and local centres and the local demographic.

Summary Visitor Profile – Solihull

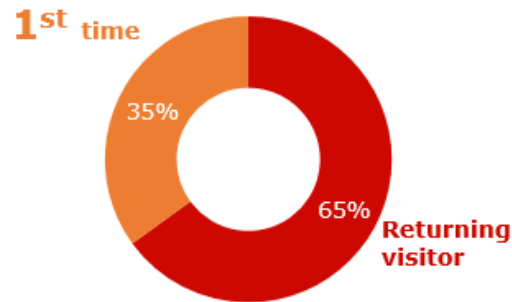
(Based on 223 visitors to Solihull)



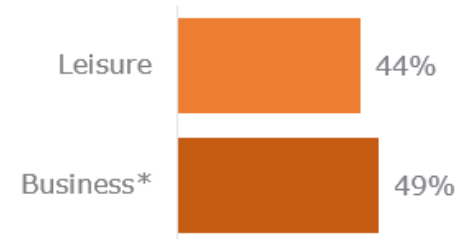
GENDER



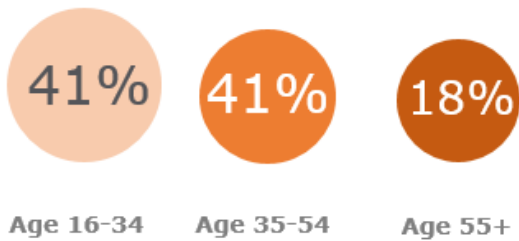
FIRST TIME VISITING



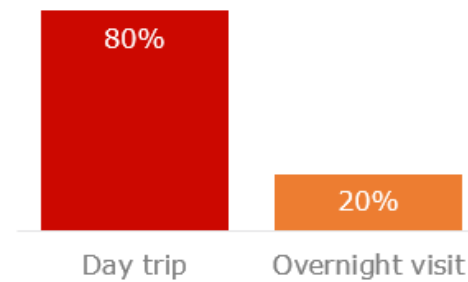
MAIN REASON FOR VISITING



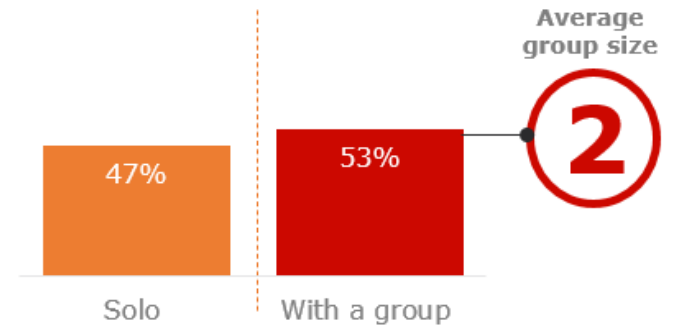
AGE



LENGTH OF VISIT



AVERAGE SIZE OF GROUP



Visit Solihull Destination Management Plan Priorities

Trends Influencing Tourism

The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality industry although, as noted, Solihull has shown signs of a strong recovery. The industry has also been impacted by Cost of Living issues and is subject to labour market pressures and complexities.

Priorities to support the tourism and hospitality industry were developed in partnership with our stakeholders. Four priorities were discussed and ranked in order of importance. The priorities are:

- 1. Improve how the borough is packaged**
- 2. Retain more local spend**
- 3. Improve the visitor experience**
- 4. Support businesses in the tourism sector**

1. Improve how the borough is packaged

Develop our 'hero themes' as a family friendly destination and gateway to the Midlands.

Analyse data on tourism opportunities so decisions are evidence-based.

Identify best routes to market to optimise tourism opportunities.

2. Retain more local spend

Look after local consumers and visitors to the Solihull who travel to other areas.

Persuade local residents to buy into 'Pride of Place.'

Engage with businesses to sell Solihull to residents and ensure safety is at the forefront of visitor experience.

3. Improve the visitor experience

Improve the built environment, such as public realm and enhance parks & green spaces through further investment.

Become more accessible.

Become a more sustainable Borough.

Improve the visitor experience from arrival to departure.

4. Support businesses in the tourism sector

Focus on skills, education, and recruitment.

Bid for events into Solihull.

Find funding for future projects to attract tourism.

How Visit Solihull Plan to Deliver on Priorities

Improve how the borough is packaged

By fostering collaboration among stakeholders and creating combined itineraries featuring the best products for each hero theme, Solihull will be able to present a much stronger tourism offer to appeal to consumer and travel trade markets. This will provide a structure and foundation for marketing campaigns to build upon, providing more focused messaging and embracing the regional offering of Birmingham, Coventry, and Warwickshire.

Developing a hero theme for Solihull to be a standalone travel destination within the West Midlands, we have identified our strongest assets. Through focus groups, we have determined how Solihull is perceived:

- Family friendly destination, offering heritage, arts, culture, parks, green spaces and waterways
- Strong retail and shopping experiences from named brands to independents
- Food lovers' destination with Michelin star restaurants and an annual food festival
- Music events, festivals, park facilities and Commonwealth Games legacy

Working with key stakeholders across all groups, we rely on data analysis for tourism opportunities, to ensure decisions are data led. Along with external data we have footfall counters and parking data that will provide an understanding to the impact local events have on town and local centres.

STEAM data and visitor surveys⁴ commissioned by WMGC will serve to steer ongoing strategies. Visit Solihull can be reactive to any environmental and economic factors that may arise but, for the most part, we will be proactive in our ongoing local approach to tourism growth.

⁴ Appendix 4: West Midlands Growth Company 2023 Visitor Survey

Visit Solihull will continue to meet with businesses at all levels to ensure we are on track and ahead of any barriers to growth or challenges for the industry, working closely with business support advisors and external support agencies.

We will identify the best routes to market to optimise tourism opportunities. We will work on digital marketing campaigns that will be driven by data and intelligence. Our Summer 2023 campaign focussed on family friendly events and activities in the borough but also aimed to attract visitors to stay overnight and extend their stay, with the Autumn/Winter campaign focusing on our strong retail offer.

Visit Solihull will work with the key stakeholders to create a shared vision for promoting the area and will additionally embrace the regional marketing approach when looking to attract new visitors. We will support future familiarisation trips via the West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Growth Company for national and international travellers.



Retain more local spend

The activities and contribution of tourists, businesses and consumers who live and work locally is a key part of Solihull's tourism economy. This will be increasingly important as the borough expands and grows with new housing development, office space and the arrival of the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail link. Visit Solihull has three key areas of focus in regard to this:

1. Developing place making and public realm interventions, particularly around towns, parks and local centres that serve residents
2. Attracting visitors to the region who are visiting family and friends or for leisure, including day visits
3. Retaining business visitors to the region from day visits to overnight stays and beyond



Both residents and visitors need to be aware of the travel trade ready assets and key attractions. Our role is to ensure that residents and families feel safe in our towns and local centres, addressing anti-social behaviour and developing concepts for empty shop units to ensure Solihull has a vibrant and varied retail offering. New powers, such as those in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023), provide local authorities with the ability to intervene where necessary, such as by taking over empty shopfronts.

A new Night Time Economy (NTE) taskforce, supported by Business Growth West Midlands, WMCA, West Midlands Police, and Solihull Business Improvement District (BID), will focus on safety and putting actions in place that will encourage a vibrant and safe evening economy for residents, visitors and businesses.

Solihull is the 'urb' in the 'rure'; our local events in parks and public spaces support an experience and act as a strong local option for when people look for new things to do and explore.

The borough has an abundance of hotels, combining big, internationally recognised chains and independents, with an overall higher proportion of four star hotels compared to neighbouring areas. Many of the hotels have large meeting spaces and conference facilities, attracting a lot of business tourism and overnight stays.

Persuading local residents to buy into pride of place, the Visit Solihull team must ensure that:

- Towns and local centres to develop their own identities to celebrate their individuality, whilst playing a part in the borough's wider tourism offering
- Invest in public art with community support, embracing cultural and social value as well as to prevent anti-social behaviour
- Support the promotion of local heritage and cultural assets, through trails and website features
- Increase the number of targeted, high quality events to retain local footfall and dwell time; extend day visits to overnight stays
- Increase the number of quality family-focused events to encourage school holiday staycations

Improve the Visitor Experience

In addition to focusing on a sustainable tourism offer and improvements to accessibility, Solihull Council will work collaboratively across departments and with partners to consider the whole visitor experience when investing in the built environment, natural environment, regeneration and transport infrastructure. The aim is to create a welcoming place for visitors and local communities in the form of new developments, public art, wayfinding, interactive apps, maps and events. Visit Solihull will work closely with the UK Central and Highways Teams to address any concerns around visitors to the borough and to support the development of emerging schemes.



Small businesses may not have the resources or budget to improve their facilities and the Visit Solihull team will work with internal and external colleagues to ensure we:

- Support businesses to improve the level of information provided to visitors regarding accessibility, taking advice and inspiration from the Accessibility Hub⁵. Often, information can be vague, or focus solely on wheelchair access, neglecting customers with other physical or mental disabilities. This will raise awareness across a range of impairments and different types of accessibility issues.
- Supporting information for parents or carers who require facilities such as baby changing or changing places facilities when visiting destinations and businesses.
- Support may be required for businesses that have become more accessible, but are not promoting their facilities to customers effectively.



Solihull Council will continue to work closely with Transport for West Midlands and others to help improve cycling, walking and transport links within the borough. For example, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and other stakeholders have identified the need to improve bus services from the NEC and Birmingham Airport to Solihull Town Centre.

Funding is available from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) to investigate how this and other transport priorities can be achieved. Visit Solihull will continue to work closely with the BID and tourism partners to identify the optimal and easy-to-follow routes for visitors looking to explore the borough.

Environmental sustainability is increasingly key to the success of all industries, and tourism is no different. To ensure

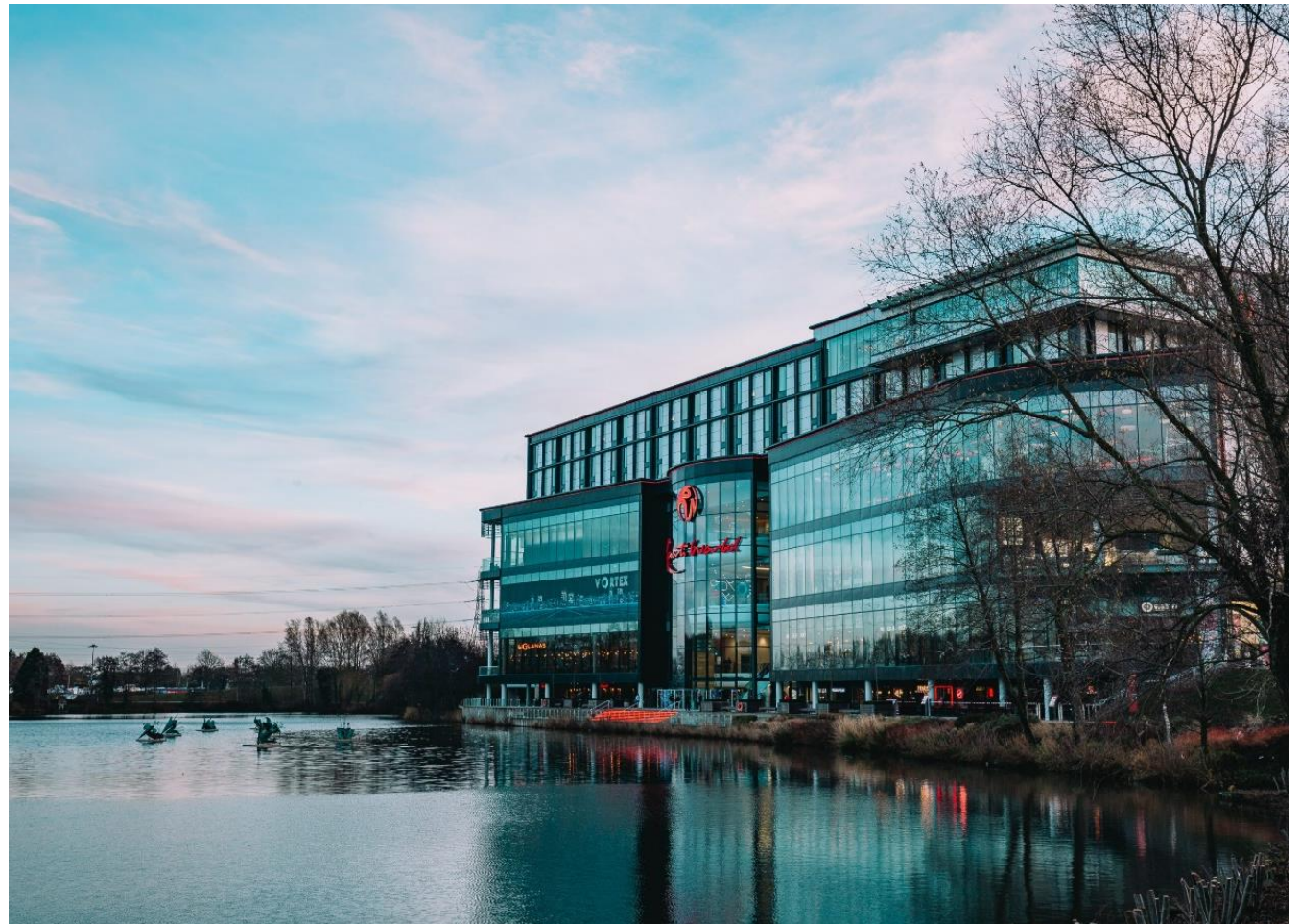
⁵ Appendix 5: Accessibility in Birmingham and West Midlands

competitiveness, the sector must embrace opportunities such as energy efficiency and renewable self-generation, resource efficiency and the circular economy. Visit Solihull was involved in the Global Destination Sustainability Movement in 2023. This acts as a benchmarking toolkit for sustainable tourism. The Destination Management Plan will assess progress towards becoming a more 'sustainable destination' using the guidance from benchmarking, drawing on marketing intelligence and through wider working with stakeholders in the borough.

The Performance Improvement Report will set out the top recommendations for action each year and these will be incorporated into the DMP, with actions measured and reported through this plan. Whilst sustainability is not currently a key reason or priority for visitors in choosing a destination, it will become an increasingly important factor as younger market segments mature.

Visit Solihull aims to offer businesses tailored sustainable tourism support in the form of:

- Training webinars
- Advice on sustainability quick wins
- Links to further training and support
- Advice on marketing sustainability
- Links to sustainability awards



Support Businesses in the Tourism Sector

The plan acknowledges how the sector has been impacted by the UK's exit from the European Union and COVID-19, especially in terms of effects on recruitment and staffing. Visit Solihull will support the efforts of WMGC, Hospitality UK, the Tourism Management Institute and other trade bodies to seek assistance for the sector and to address the skills and recruitment gap.

The Tourism Stakeholder Group has representation from education partners to advise on support and offer accreditation and upskilling for those looking to join the industry.

Visit Solihull will work closely with Business Growth West Midlands (BGWM) to facilitate diagnostic support, identifying individual and business needs within the sector. The results of this, alongside focus groups and the Tourism Stakeholder Group, will inform tailored support for the industry, such as one-to-ones, webinars, networking events and business toolkits. Support will be delivered via other Council departments, including Employment and Skills, Procurement and Climate Change and Sustainability, to continue to showcase Solihull's major assets and improve the overall visitor experience.

Visit Solihull will also seek to play a role in any local initiatives to promote viable career paths in the visitor economy. The focus group meetings led by WMGC will help identify issues facing the industry and any areas of business support and upskilling for future activities. In addition, Visit Solihull plans to work closely with the BGWM service to further address barriers to growth.

Bidding for Events and Funding Streams

Solihull Council is part of the West Midlands Growth Company's Major Events Advisory Group, which aims to promote the West Midlands as a host for international events.

Aligned with a package of promotion delivered by WMGC, major events can contribute to levelling up economic performance in the West Midlands by:

- Raising the national and international profile of the region and its conference and event assets
- Sustaining an increase in domestic and international visitors
- Boosting inward investment right across the region, including in primary and nascent clusters in the West Midlands Plan for Growth
- Creating and safeguarding good quality jobs, including supporting high-growth firms in priority clusters
- Brokering new international relationships and trade opportunities for regional businesses

Visit Solihull will also continue to work closely with key stakeholders, seeking to attract new events into the region and working on joined up promotion in the towns and local centres. We will look to bid for further funding opportunities for the tourism sector in Solihull. Further sources of grant funding could arise from Visit England/VisitBritain for specific projects, as well as ongoing UK Shared Prosperity Funding and Commonwealth Games Legacy funding.

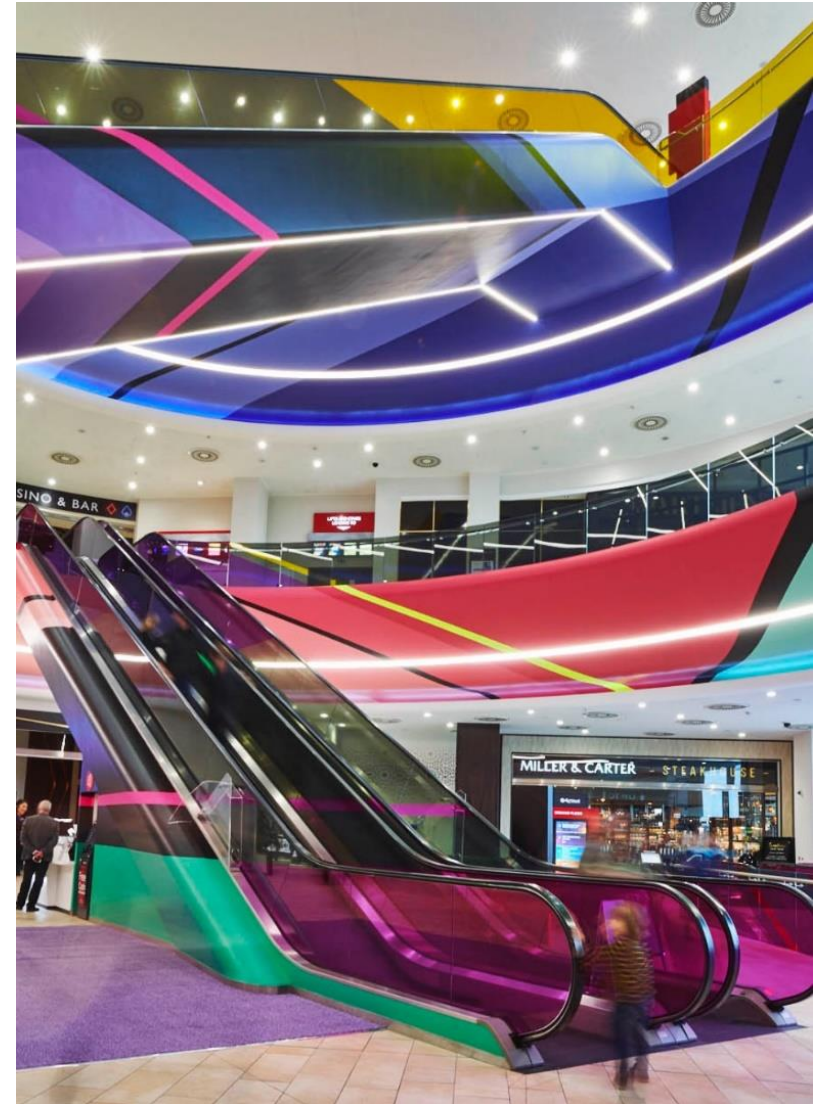
Visit Solihull will work with public and private sector partners to establish joint marketing campaigns and co-ordinated initiatives to support the local visitor economy.



Opportunities for the Industry: Accessible Tourism

In the UK, the 'Purple Pound' – the term used for the spending power of disabled people and their families – is worth £274 billion annually and is estimated to be rising by 14% per year. However, fewer than 10% of organisations have a targeted plan to access the disability market. This is a significant missed opportunity for organisations that could be benefiting both socially and commercially.

- 1 in 5 of the UK and EU population is living with a disability.
- 80% of disabled people have hidden impairments. Only 9% use a wheelchair.
- 75% of disabled people and their families have walked away from a UK business because of poor accessibility or customer service.
- 73% of potential customers with disabilities experienced barriers on more than a quarter of websites they visited.
- Solihull Council to actively promote accessible car parking.



Importance of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

To create better lives, safe places and a community that welcomes and celebrates the diversity of the borough we will:

- Ensure that our business support programmes and communications are inclusive of the wider community, with a particular focus on diversity of business owners and people across the borough.
- Engage more with diverse businesses, who may not be aware of the help and support they can receive via Solihull Council and partners. Acknowledge the diversity of the business community in the borough and highlight those via our channels. Connect diverse businesses with opportunities to network, collaborate and be seen.
- Showcase our business tourism assets and actively represent the wider borough as a cultural hub to visitors and businesses. Give an opportunity to businesses from diverse and ethnic backgrounds to attract more footfall and a more diverse audience into Solihull. Focus on providing a cultural offer to the borough, an inclusive events programme. Address issues facing businesses in recruitment.
- Create a cultural hub for people, place, and business. Highlight the diversity of the borough and changing perceptions for those who wish to live, work, and invest here, through a commitment to finding solutions to challenges faced by different cultures, ethnic groups, and other protected groups within the region.
- Improve accessibility in the borough and ensure, where relevant, that transport and infrastructure projects engage with the Vulnerable Road Users Group to obtain early feedback to inform design development.
- Work closely with colleagues across the Council to ensure events, business support, heritage, arts, and culture are inclusive of an ever-changing and diverse borough and that they are reflective of the communities and businesses that shape Solihull.

Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs)

Solihull is a partner in the Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country LVEP, accredited in the first round of assessments by the VisitEngland industry panel, demonstrating excellence in visitor economy partnership and practice.

VisitEngland is creating a portfolio of these nationally supported, strategic and high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). The new LVEPs aim to work in collaboration on shared priorities and targets. Our mission is to support and grow the visitor economy through robust destination management, strong stakeholder relationships and clear planning.



The accreditation scheme will run alongside the pilot of a tiering model in the North East of England, and a second, West Midlands pilot. These will run over the next couple of years as a top tier partnership known as a Destination Development Partnership (DDP) with the opportunity to focus on activities that ensure their destinations remain sustainable, competitive and responsive to challenges such as boosting skills, accessibility and levelling up.

DDPs will set regional priorities for the visitor economy and will receive government funding to focus on key objectives. Each DDP will be a partnership of LVEPs across a geography, with one taking the lead. This pilot model will demonstrate the case for direct government investment in the sector. There will eventually be 15 to 20 DDPs across England.

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions

Business Tourism and Business Events, also known as Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE), represent a significant and lucrative part of the tourism industry. The infographic below, from the West Midlands Growth Company, highlights the main trends in MICE activities in the West Midlands.

Total Impacts* – 2022



81.7k business events



£1.9bn direct spend



Delegates / visitors from UK (outside West Midlands) were the most significant in 2022 – 54% of spend. Overseas visits accounted for 9%.



Exhibitions accounted for nearly 26% of spend in 2022. Consumer events generated the most visitors and spend overall.



8.3 million delegates



43,000 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) supported



Gtr. Birmingham & Solihull – 72% of direct spend in 2022. Coventry & Warks 22% and Black Country 6%.



11.6 million delegate days



Meetings & conferences was the most significant MICE category – 74% of direct spend in 2022. Corporates were the largest segment (63% of spend).



The MICE had bounced back well from the Covid-19 pandemic – value in 2022 was about 83% of 2019 levels.

* Impact includes trips and spend by West Midlands residents

Monitoring of the Destination Management Plan

Media Relations

Omni channel promotion of Visit Solihull via the website, Instagram, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Tik Tok, Threads and LinkedIn. Using each channel to showcase the best of the borough and target the specific audiences for B2B and B2C. To work with WMGC and the Solihull Council Press Office to further promote to consumer and travel trade media to achieve positive editorial coverage of the destination that helps build the brand and drives website traffic. To use the Visit Solihull newsletter to actively promote local businesses, key assets, and events.

Content Marketing

Create, curate, share and syndicate content to promote Solihull to a growing and engaged audience. Use blogs to showcase the best of the borough and as marketing collateral on each of the sites. Develop digital marketing campaigns to increase traffic to website and paid advertising and 'pay-per-click' digital campaigns to showcase what makes Solihull special.

Accountability

Visit Solihull has set up a Tourism Stakeholder Group with influential decision makers within the local visitor economy. The advocacy panel will help champion the Destination Management Plan within the industry and ensure that its objectives are met. The panel will also help set the direction of new initiatives as the plan evolves.

Sources of Funding

Visit Solihull benefitted from £39,950 from the UK Shard Prosperity Fund to develop digital marketing campaigns in 2023-24. Funding has also been secured through the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund via the West Midlands Combined Authority, with potential future funding through Visit Britain and the Local Visitor Economy Partnership.

Footnote

This document is expected to be continually evolving and shaped by continued dialogue with our Tourism stakeholders and partners, both in response to their needs and in adapting to the changing context and environment.

Action Plan and Monitoring

Priority Area	Action	Responsibility
1. Improve how the borough is packaged	<p>Support the development of the Visit Solihull USP and narrative to market the borough in future campaigns, based on the STEAM data and the four priorities set out by the Tourism Stakeholder Group.</p> <p>Develop the Borough's competitive strategy against comparator regions, promoting key strengths.</p> <p>Ensure the narrative is featured within the regional 2024 campaigns to be delivered through the West Midlands Growth Company, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visitor Pass for domestic audiences 2. Student campaign 3. International Visitor campaign in partnership with Visit Britain 4. Business Tourism campaign 5. Sports targeted campaign (Sports Accord April 2024) 	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>WMGC</p> <p>Tourism Stakeholder Group</p>
1. Improve how the borough is packaged	<p>Promote the Night Time Economy, supporting a 'safer' borough in collaboration with West Midlands Police and Solihull BID to develop safer streets awareness in Towns and Local Centres.</p>	<p>Night Time Economy Taskforce</p>
1. Improve how the borough is packaged	<p>Promote Sustainable Tourism, utilising the features and progress of the Global Destination Sustainability Measurement benchmarking tool and associated support for the sector. Promote EV charging points infrastructure to visitors across the Borough.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p>
2. Retain more local spend	<p>Develop and promote a programme of culturally diverse events for the borough, attracting new audiences and enhancing the strong programme of existing events ran by key partners across Solihull.</p> <p>Support the development of an emerging Cultural Strategy for the borough.</p>	<p>Cultural Tourism Group</p> <p>Solihull BID</p> <p>SMBC Communities Team</p> <p>SMBC Arts, Culture, Events Teams</p>
2. Retain more local spend	<p>Support the development of new public art projects and improve public realm across the Borough's towns and local centres</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p>

		SMBC Arts, Culture, Events, Public Realm, Heritage Teams
2. Retain more local spend	<p>Support the development and promotion of heritage within the Borough, building on existing heritage trails and heritage assets across Solihull.</p> <p>Develop and promote a Heritage QR trail across the Borough.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>SMBC Arts, Culture, Events, Public Realm, Heritage Teams</p> <p>Local Community Groups and Parish Councils</p>
2. Retain more local spend	<p>Support the development and promotion of interactive visitor information across the borough, utilising technology through QR and AR to attract footfall to local high streets and public areas.</p> <p>Develop new wayfaring opportunities – including digital interactive technology.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>SMBC Arts, Culture, Events, Public Realm, Heritage Teams</p>
2. Retain more local spend	<p>Promoting Visit Solihull's website and social media to local demographic to raise awareness around local events, businesses, and promotions.</p> <p>Support the development of the website and content through local community engagement.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>SMBC Arts, Culture, Events, Public Realm, Heritage Teams</p> <p>Local Community Groups and Parish Councils</p>
3. Improve the visitor experience	<p>Improving and promoting accessibility for all user groups, including transport, wayfaring and supporting businesses and attractions with enhanced accessibility.</p> <p>Work with key stakeholders across the borough to promote and advocate for Purple Tuesday, supporting those with a disability.</p> <p>Support and promote local businesses and facilities to meet religious and other social needs.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>Cultural Tourism Group</p> <p>WMGC</p> <p>Internal task force and key stakeholders</p>
3. Improve the visitor experience	<p>Invest in arts and culture projects boroughwide to develop a sense of pride of place, tackle anti-social behaviour and graffiti and support wellbeing.</p>	<p>Visit Solihull</p> <p>SMBC Arts and Culture and Public Realm Teams</p>

3. Improve the visitor experience	Develop place-making principles to build upon and promote the unique identity of the borough's individual towns and local centres.	Visit Solihull
4. Support businesses in the tourism sector	Facilitate and lead internal Solihull Council cross directorate working around key issues affecting the visitor economy and utilise Tourism Stakeholder Groups to contribute to key agendas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability, recruitment and skills • Climate change and sustainability • Arts and culture • Transport and infrastructure • UK Central Development • Public realm and park development 	Visit Solihull SMBC Teams
4. Support businesses in the tourism sector	Utilise Tourism Forum to deliver training workshops and promote resources and business support programmes on key topics, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business support • Recruitment and skills • Sustainability • Accessibility • Corporate Social Responsibility 	Visit Solihull Employment and Skills Team Sustainability Team Business Growth West Midlands VisitEngland/Britain WMCA WMGC
4. Support businesses in the tourism sector	Support the regional Local Visitor Economy Partnership and the creation of a West Midlands Destination Development Partnership, using the key stakeholders to ensure Solihull's priorities are featured and attracting relevant regional support to borough.	VisitEngland/Britain WMGC

List of Appendices

[Appendix 1: The Economic Impact of the Visitor Economy Solihull](#)

[Appendix 2: Local skills improvement plans \(LSIPs\) and local skills improvement fund \(LSIF\)](#)

[GOV.UK Policy Paper](#)

[Appendix 3: Make It West Midlands Travel Trade Guide](#)

[Appendix 4: West Midlands Growth Company 2023 Visitor Survey](#)

[Appendix 5: Accessibility in Birmingham and West Midlands](#)

Appendix 6: Development of Visit Solihull's Destination Management Plan

The Development Management Plan (DMP) has been developed in partnership with local stakeholders active within the Solihull tourism industry.

- The Tourism Stakeholder group met in June 2023 to discuss the broader tourism strategy for Solihull and the wider region. From that meeting four key priorities were proposed to be disseminated to other tourism focussed groups at all levels to help form the DMP.
- The Cultural Tourism Group, Tourism Forum and Shirley Ambassador's focus group meetings led by Visit Solihull and WMGC in September 2023 were planned to discuss the action plan set out by the Tourism Stakeholder Group in June.
- The Tourism Stakeholder Group met again in September 2023 to review the findings of the three focus groups and discuss the DMP and feedback raised, from a strategic level.
- Findings from the three focus groups and the Tourism Stakeholder Group form an action plan for the Visit Solihull team to take forward to complete the DMP.
- The DMP is being recommended to Solihull Council Cabinet for approval in January 2024.
- Visit Solihull DMP will feed into the LVEP led by WMGC and Visit England.
- The DMP's priorities will be aligned with the West Midlands Regional Tourism Strategy delivery between 2019-29.



Appendix 7: SMBC 2023 Sustainability Objectives

“84% of respondents to the Solihull Place Survey 2022 are satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live, compared to the England average of 79%”

Key Objectives

- To develop a ‘green tourism’ action plan for Solihull’s visitor economy, based on the Global Destination Sustainability Measurement (GDSM) index and pathway to improvement.
- To be Net Zero as a Council by 2030 and as a borough by 2041.
- To increase connectivity and accessibility into the borough to improve the uptake of public transport and active travel by visitors.
- To improve air quality of the borough and increase levels of carbon sequestration by planting 250,000 trees by 2030.
- To improve the level of natural capital and biodiversity in the borough.

Ongoing activity that supports the objectives

- Offering diagnostic support with sustainability experts at the Business Growth West Midlands (BGWM) to identify business needs and challenges with becoming more sustainable.
- Utilise the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDSM) benchmarking toolkit to help bridge gaps in support currently offered and knowledge within the industry.
- Two thirds of Solihull is green belt land and there are sixteen green flag parks. The Natural Capital Investment Strategy (NCIS) seeks to quantify the value of natural capital in the borough to develop a framework to embed natural capital in all actions the Council takes. This NCIS seeks to mitigate the effects of both the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis.
- The natural environment teams seeks to increase carbon sequestration and improve the air quality of the borough by tree planting using the Council’s Planting Our Future initiative and Arden Free Tree Scheme.

- The Transport and Active Travel team seeks to increase cycling and walking in the borough by residents and visitors using the cycling and walking strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- The UK Central team is supporting the roll out of extensive electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure to support sustainable travel and access for visitors, with the UK's largest public EV charging hub on the NEC Campus.
- Within the 2022/2023 preliminary design of Dickens Heath and improved Knowle routes took place and option development for these LCWIP routes is ongoing.
 - UKC Hub to Solihull (via Catherine de Barnes)
 - UKC Hub to Balsall Common
 - UKC Hub to Sheldon (among the A45, Birmingham City Council are carrying out feasibility works looking at the section of the A45 from Sheldon to Birmingham)
- The Climate Change and Sustainability team continue to implement the Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to net zero, including Council carbon emissions by 2041.



References and Further Reading

1. [Shirley Economic Plan 2020](#)
2. Visitor Economy Plan 2018-2019
3. [Solihull Economic Strategy 2023 – 2032](#)
4. [Solihull Council Plan 2020 – 2025](#)
5. [Your Future Solihull](#)
6. [Net Zero Carbon Council Plan 2030](#)
7. [Net Zero Action Plan](#)
8. [Solihull Connected](#)
9. [Cultural Delivery Partners](#)
10. [West Midlands MICE Impact Study 2022](#)
11. STEAM Data on Visit Solihull Economic Recovery – [STEAM Solihull Presentation 24 May 2023.pdf](#)
12. [West Midlands Growth Company Toolkit](#)
13. [Purple Tuesday](#)
14. [Accessibility Hub](#)
15. [Local Visitor Economy Partnership \(LVEP\) Growth Plan](#)
16. [Night-Time Economy Report 2023](#)

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