



Corporate Policy and Performance Board

**Tuesday, 3 September 2024 6.30 p.m.
Town Hall, Runcorn**

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Sian Davidson	Conservative
Councillor Valerie Hill	Labour
Councillor Noel Hutchinson	Labour
Councillor Rosie Leck	Labour
Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Katy McDonough	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Sharon Thornton	Labour

*Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or
kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.*

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 5 November 2024

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

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1. MINUTES	1 - 4
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion and voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 4 June 2024
in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Davidson, Logan,
A. Lowe, McDonough and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Leck, A. McInerney and N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, E. Dawson, P. Garnett and M. Reaney

Also in attendance: Councillor V. Hill

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

		<i>Action</i>
CS1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 23 January 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The Board was presented with the Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board.	
	RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.	
CS4	ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24	
	The Board considered a copy of the Annual Report from the Chair of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board for 2023/24. The Board had met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2023 to March 2024.	
	RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be noted.	

CS5 CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 31ST MARCH 2024

The Board was provided with a report from the Head of HR Operations, which presented details of health and safety management within the Authority from 1 April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The report highlighted health and safety incidents that had taken place over the past 12 months and as a result of those incident, proposed actions for the future. In addition, the report included information around the number of actual near misses, accidents that had resulted over 7 day absences, together with significant accidents.

The following information was also highlighted from the report:

- The Health and Safety Executive continued to undertake checks on schools to ensure correct management of asbestos and to date, no problems had been reported;
- Nationally, no further progress had made been made with Martin's Law but Members would be updated accordingly; and
- New technology to be introduced for lone working and further information would be provided in the next report.

A member of the Board expressed concerns that the Direct Link did not have the facility to contact emergency services. It was reported that this was an IT issue and a resolution was being explored and Members would be updated accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted including the recommendations and actions for 2024/25.

Councillor Sian Davidson declared an interest for the following item due to a family member being in receipt of pension benefits.

Councillor Sharon Thornton declared an interest in the following item as her employer had received funding for the Holidays Activity Fund.

CS6 PROGRESS UPDATES REGARDING THE HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24, AND THE LATEST HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND FOR THE PERIOD 1ST

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

APRIL 2024 – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which outlined the final spend position regarding the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund for 2023/24.

A spending plan had been prepared and was attached as Appendix A. It was noted that £158,077 had been allocated to the Discretionary Support Scheme within the Benefits Division to process applications. As per Government guidance, it was intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need, including families with children, pensioners and people with disabilities.

Appendix B of the report contained detailed information relating to spending for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. This included expenditure from partner organisations including Halton Citizens Advice Bureau; Widnes Foodbank; Runcorn Foodbank; Holiday Activity Food Programme; Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus; and Halton Voluntary Action.

A member of the Board requested that consideration be given to providing food vouchers the Community Shop, as well as the major supermarkets. Officers agreed to explore this option and update Members accordingly.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) the final position regarding the Household Support Fund for 2023/24 be noted; and
- ii) the spending plan for the Household Support Fund for the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024 be noted.

Director of
Finance

CS7 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 3 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 3 of 2023/24. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

- Finance;
- Operational HR Division, Chief Executive's Delivery

Unit;

- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services; and
- Property Services.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 3 Performance Management report be noted.

CS8 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 4 of 2023/24. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

- Finance;
- Operational HR Division, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services; and
- Property Services.

Members of the Board noted the report and following discussions the following actions were agreed:

- Members to be provided with a further update on the progress of the cessation of the School Meals Service;
- An update report on the DCBL Stadium to be presented at the next meeting; and
- Increasing agency costs and lack of uptake on the Apprenticeship Scheme to be discussed at the next Topic Group meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 4 Performance Management report be noted.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

Meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 3 September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

None identified.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None identified.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None identified.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None identified.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None identified.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None identified.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None identified.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 3 September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
None identified.
- 5.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
None identified.
- 5.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families
None identified.
- 5.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
None identified.

5.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None identified.

5.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None identified.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1

Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13 JUNE 2024**

EXB2	2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 31 MARCH 2024
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which reported the Council's overall revenue net spending position for the 2023/24 financial year.

A summary of spending against the Council's revenue and capital net spending position for 2023/24 was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms net spending as at 31 March 2024 was £5.633m over budget. This was an improvement from the forecast outturn position of £7.144m reported at the end of December 2023, which showed that the actions being taken by Directorates were having a positive effect. Whilst an improved position, it was still a detrimental impact upon the Council's finances and further reduced the Council's limited reserves.

The report also detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 March 2024. The current balance of reserve totalled £5.149m which was considered to be a minimum level which the Council should hold.

In addition, it was noted that Capital Spending at 31 March 2024 totalled £43.939m, which was 71.4% of the planned spending £61.528m (which assumed a 20% slippage between years). Appendix 2 presented details of spending against all capital schemes. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 March 2024.

It was noted that the 2024/25 budget had been increased to reflect the increased spending against all the high-pressure areas. It did not provide a budget for the excess cost of agency staff (the assumption being that departments provided for this by reducing spending elsewhere) and the budget also included Transformation Programme savings target of £4m.

A report on the 2024/25 budget monitoring position as at 31 May 2024 along with an initial outturn forecast, would be presented at the earliest opportunity to allow for any urgent corrective action to be taken.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council's 2023/24 outturn position as presented in the report be noted;
- 2) Directorates take all possible steps to manage spending in line with budget during 2024/25; and

- 3) Priority is given to the acceleration of the Council's Transformation Programme, to ensure it is sufficiently developed to deliver the savings required to meet the medium-term financial gap and help the Council replenish its reserves.

EXB3	DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 2023 - 24
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the fourth quarter period to 31 March 2024, for the People Directorate (Social Care Health); and the Enterprise, Community and Resources Directorate.

The Board was advised that the Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from the relevant quarter for each Directorate and was aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and Executive Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. Performance Management would continue to be important in the demonstration of value for money and strengthening accountability.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

EXB4	DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented five applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the five applications, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Change, Grow, Live for premises at 75 High Street, Runcorn, be rejected on the basis that they are a Charity who operate nationally;

- 2) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Care UK Charity for premises at 3-5 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, be rejected on the basis that they are a Charity who operate nationally;
- 3) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Staffordshire Winter Sports Club Ltd for premises at Silver Blades Ice Rink, Earle Road, Widnes, be rejected on the basis that they are a Charity who operate nationally;
- 4) the application for discretionary relief from Gateway Community Ltd for premises at Hallmark House, Constance Industrial Estate, Waterloo Road, Widnes, be approved at 90% with effect from 1 April 2023; and
- 5) the application for discretionary rate relief from English Table Tennis Association Ltd for premises at Units 17-18, Greenoaks Way, Widnes, Cheshire, be rejected on the basis that they are an organisation who operate nationally.

EXB5	CORPORATE SECURITY CONTRACT
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which notified members of the intention to go out to tender with regard to procuring a new corporate security contract in line with the Council's procurement strategy. The new contract would commence on 1 April 2025 and would be for a three year period, with the option for a 12 month extension subject to satisfactory performance.

RESOLVED: That Members note the intention to go out to tender via the Chest in respect of procuring a new corporate security contract.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2024

EXB14	DELIVERED OF MANAGED DETECTION RESPONSE – KEY DECISION
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The Board considered a report of the Director ICT and Support Services, which sought approval of a key project that would adopt/deliver innovative security technologies to address the evolving cyber threat landscape, reducing cyber risk and detection time, the primary aim of which would be to improve the security footprint of the Authority.

Following approval of the Halton Digital Strategy by Executive Board in April 2024, the IT Security Team had evaluated eight security offers and three had been chosen for final evaluation. Detailed evaluation had taken place and it was agreed that MDR offered the price point, level of service and had the in house resource to manage and maintain an essential key technology solution.

Reason(s) for Decision

The security of the authority, compliance with the DHLUC Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Following approval of the Halton Digital Strategy by Management Team and Executive Board in March and April 2024, the IT Security Team have evaluated eight security offerings within the marketplace this was narrowed down to three Tier 1 solutions, the offerings in question are cloud based remote management services primarily for threat detection, response and remediation.

Implementation Date

It is intended to initiate a 20 day proof of concept installation 24 June 2024 prior to any go live, this will also comply with additional cyber security requirement prior to the general election.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the procurement of a MDR (Managed Detection Response) System for a single payment of £638,001, delivering over five-year contracted term be approved; and
- 2) the investment strategy be approved.

EXB15	TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME BOARD
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which outlined a proposed model for a Transformation Programme Board, using Working Party principles. The Council's Transformation Programme started on 1 April 2023, and it had grown in both scope and complexity. The Programme would be in place until 31 March 2026.

It was proposed that given the operation of the Transformation Programme would require more intensive governance between now and March 2026, a dedicated Transformation Programme Board would need to be established. The Board would:

- consist of the ten Executive Members of the Council, appointed as a Working Party;
- make recommendations to Executive Board as and when necessary; and
- receive recommendations from Policy and Performance Board Topic Groups as part of the Council's scrutiny arrangements pertaining to Re-imagine Halton Transformation projects.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report is noted;
- 2) the establishment of a Transformation Programme Board be approved;
- 3) a Working Party consisting of the ten Executive Members be appointed to form the Transformation Programme Board, and make recommendations to the Executive Board, as required; and
- 4) the Board agrees to request and evaluate progress update reports from other Council Boards and Committees, on current and planned policy development work related to transformation project activity.

EXB16	PRODUCTIVITY PLAN
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit which outlined the requirement for a Productivity Plan to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. A copy of a letter from the Minister for Local Government and the Productivity Plan were attached as appendices to the report.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorses the Productivity Plan for submission to DLUHC

EXB17	2024/25 TO 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME
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The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance, on the Council’s total planned capital programme expenditure and associated funding over the next three years.

The 2024/27 Capital Strategy Statement was approved by Council on 6 March 2024. Subsequently, new capital grant allocations had been received and slippage to capital projects for 2023/24 had been rolled forward to 2024/25. The report brought all the separate elements together and outlined the planned capital programme expenditure and funding for the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the updated capital programme for 2024-27, including forecast spend and funding, as set out in Table 1 and Table 2.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 3rd September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Programmes Office update

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an annual update to Corporate PPB on the work of the Programmes Office in securing and managing external funding resources.
- 1.2 The Report covers the following areas:
- An update on the Programmes Office key activities and priorities.
 - Funding statistics for the period 2023-24.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Programmes Office role is to help maximize external funding into the Borough and to undertake the monitoring for large-scale grant programmes to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback. The Office, formerly the External Funding Team, was established in October 2022 and consists of the following posts and officers:
- Programmes Office Manager – Steph Davies
 - Senior Funding Development Officer – Melanie Dodd
 - Funding Development Officer – currently vacant
 - Senior Monitoring Officer – Sara Wilson
 - Funding and Monitoring Officer – Jonathan Patten
 - Funding and Monitoring Officer 0.5 – currently vacant
 - Funding Support Assistant – Robbie Arrowsmith
 - Promotions Officer 0.5 – currently being delivered by an agency.
- 3.2 The Team is responsible for preparing medium to large-scale funding bids (primarily over £50,000) on behalf of Council colleagues, public sector partners, the voluntary sector and the private sector, with the aim of maximising external funding

opportunities for Halton.

- 3.3 The Team focuses mainly on the following funding sources: Government, National Lottery, Landfill Funding, Trusts and Foundations. Current examples include UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Town Deal Fund, Long Term Plan for Towns.

Key functions of the Team include:

- Drafting or proofing of large-scale grant funding bids.
- Monitoring of strategic grant programmes, including the submission of claims, in order to ensure compliance and eliminate clawback.
- Maintaining a strategic approach to funding to ensure the most appropriate bids from Halton are submitted and internal competition is averted, including the development of strategic project pipelines.
- Undertaking funding searches for specific projects; bid writing and development of supporting documents, e.g., policies and business plans etc.
- Dissemination of funding information to target audiences, mainly via the production of monthly Funding Bulletins on a range of themes.
- Lobbying funders, developing strong relationships with key funding bodies, and participating in key forums to ensure Halton gets its fair share of funding.
- Developing strong partnerships with Council colleagues, and the voluntary and private sectors where appropriate, to submit joint bids.
- Develop and deliver a training programme for HBC colleagues and partner organisations to enable capacity building.

3.4 **Key Priorities 2023-24**

Emphasis over the period 2023-24 has been on:

- Continuing to embed the new Programmes Office function, including strategic work to develop a pipeline of Regeneration projects and a project management system to support the delivery of this.
- Supporting the delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda, including Towns Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Long-Term Plan for Towns
- Developing a Funding Plan to support the delivery of HBC's Climate Change Action Plan
- Delivering A Destination Marketing programme, which is part of an LCR-wide funded scheme, to promote Halton's visitor economy and cultural assets to both residents and visitors.
- Supporting the development of the HBC Cultural Strategy and Heritage Open Days programme.

3.5 The Team continues to look at how we can further support HBC colleagues to bid for funding for priority schemes in order that we do not miss out on any appropriate funding streams. And starting to track projects in the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department via a tracker which reviews progress, funding and risks.

3.6 **Key Projects and Team stats**

This section outlines a number of key projects that the Programmes Office are delivering and/or monitoring:

- i) Destination Halton Marketing Programme
- ii) UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme
- iii) Reconnecting Runcorn - Towns Fund Programme

3.7 **Destination Halton Marketing Programme**

This is an LCR-wide scheme funded through the Combined Authority's Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) running from April 2022 to March 2025.

3.8 Halton received a total of £115k in funding, having contributed £30k in match. £12,000 of this was top sliced for central functions, leaving a budget of £103k over the three years.

3.9 The key outcome of the programme was '*To increase inbound national and regional domestic leisure and business visitor days to Halton by 17,693 equating to £1,116,272 in visitor expenditure*'.

3.10 The Programmes Office was required to submit a Project Delivery Plan for the three-year programme; key outputs included:

- Re-establish Halton's Visitor Economy Network and hold quarterly meetings.
- Commission Destination Marketing specialists to deliver 3 Halton campaigns per annum.
- Re-establish the Visit Halton website and regularly update for the duration of the programme.

3.11 Key progress is detailed below:

- 7 meetings of the re-established Visitor Economy Network – now called *Marketing Halton*. This forum is chaired by Rob Sanderson-Thomas from Norton Priory and includes a range of members from visitor attractions, the private sector and HBC. Discussion is currently underway about how to continue this forum beyond the end of the programme in March 2025
- Visit Halton (www.visithalton.co.uk) has been revamped under three key headings: Heritage, Art/Culture, and

Active/Outdoors. Hits to the site are increasing consistently and the website has also been used as a portal for Halton's 50th anniversary celebrations, and it is anticipated it will also act as the key portal of information for Halton's Borough of Culture year in 2026.

- Campaigns delivered to date include:
 - Halton Map – map of key sites, along with a music map and film by Pete Waterman.
 - Halton Heritage Open Days 2023 – brochure developed on the national theme of *Creativity Unwrapped* highlighting Halton's heritage and events.
 - *50 Quirky Things to Do in Halton* – leaflet and publicity campaign developed to run through 2024 to coincide with Halton's 50th celebrations – see Appendix 1.
 - *A Taste of Halton* brochure developed showcasing Halton's food and drink venues – see Appendix 2.
 - A Halton Alternative Conference Venue Guide – see Appendix 3.
 - Halton Heritage Open Days 2024 – brochure developed on the national theme of *Routes, Networks and Connections* – see Appendix 4

- 3.12 Halton Borough Council is the highest achieving local authority in the programme according to LCR programme leads and Marketing Liverpool; an example of feedback in the interim evaluation includes:
- 3.13 Halton have been really positive throughout the whole project, seized every opportunity...Halton is the number 1 partner in the programme.
- 3.14 Halton are absolutely brilliant, and their approach has been fantastic; could not have asked for a better partner, Halton are the shining example.
- 3.15 Halton have used a lean share of the City Region funding really wisely.
- 3.16 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**
 UKSPF is a government funding scheme allocated through the Combined Authority from April 2022-March 2025 and seen as a 'replacement' fund once the European Funding Programme ceased when the UK left the European Union.
- 3.17 Halton receives a 7.9% allocation of the Combined Authority pot, and the funding is split into a number of streams, including:
 Green, Resilient, Safe Communities - £301,059
 Local Culture, Arts, Heritage - £188,900
 Town Centres - £118,063
 Business Support Programme - £366,742

Employment Support Programme - £579,626

3.18 Funding is split into capital and revenue and across the three-year period. A breakdown of projects in each of the strands is included below. Strands are led by relevant project leads across HBC and the Programmes Office is driving and monitoring spend and progress against outputs/outcomes.

3.19 **Green, Resilient, Safe Communities**

Projects in this strand are:

- Deliver two neighbourhood environmental projects – these are Montgomery Road in Widnes and Riddings Lane in Runcorn and will be delivered in 24-25.
- Award eight green grants to community groups – 10 grants were awarded in 23-24 totalling £18,117 to: Clifton Road Allotment Association; Forget Me Not Garden; Friends of Hale Village; Four Estates; Grangeway Community Forum; Greenfingers Gardening Group; Halton Village Millennium Green; Preston Brook Pre-School; St John and St Paul Transform Widnes; Wonky Garden
- Plant 500 trees with community groups/businesses as part of the Big Halton Forest – this was delivered in 2024 with Ormiston Chadwick School, year 9 and 10 pupils.
- Deliver an Eco Festival – this was led by Victoria Park Environment Team in Victoria Park in August 2023
- Deliver energy advice and grants for small energy projects – this will be delivered in 24-25.
- Develop a green corridor into a town centre to encourage sustainable travel – this will be delivered on Church Street, Runcorn in 24-25 to tie in with the Town Deal development area.
- Create a community garden – a disused allotment site in Kingsway, Widnes was cleared in early 2024 ready to create a community allotment garden.

3.20 **Local Arts, Culture, Heritage**

Projects in this strand are:

- Create an events management/cultural role to support Halton's cultural sector – a part-time Culture Officer post commenced in April 23 and will run until March 2025
- Deliver a programme of cultural events and the development of a cultural strategy – a number of events have been funded including Makefest, Ecofest, Eurovision and Halton's 50th anniversary events. A Cultural Strategy was produced in 2023 – see Appendix 5
- Award six small grants to support local cultural organisations – 7 grants were awarded in March 2024 to organisations delivering projects that celebrate Halton's 50th Anniversary; these are: Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum;

Digital Art Box, Fortuna Female Society; Halton Heritage Partnership; Norton Priory; Pride in Halton; Runcorn Community Choir.

- Undertake small capital improvements to the Brindley – new chairs have been purchased for the Studio and the remaining capital will be spent in 2024-25 on an education room.

3.21 **Town Centres**

Projects in this strand are:

- Make improvements to four market stalls at Widnes Market to attract new businesses – this was completed in 2023-24 and all four refurbished stalls are occupied, supporting 4 local businesses and 2 new jobs.
- Develop and deliver a diagnostic tool that supports 47 town centre businesses – this is behind schedule but is anticipated to be delivered in 2024-25.
- Develop better signposting for town centre businesses via the HBC website – this will be delivered by a specialist agency in 2024-25 and will include social media promotional campaigns.
- Deliver online masterclasses to town centre businesses – this is behind schedule, but it is anticipated that it will be delivered in 2024-25.

Deliver three town centre events – four events have been delivered: ComiCon and Market Music Fest, both at Widnes Market in August and September 2023 respectively; Fireworks in November 2023 and Makefest in Halton Lea Library in March 2024.

3.22 Spend to date is on track, with just a couple of projects behind on delivery, namely the town centre business support programme and neighbourhood environmental schemes and green corridors. Plans are in place to mitigate delays with full delivery anticipated by March 2025.

3.23 At this point, there is no confirmation of any future UKSPF funding from Government beyond March 2025.

3.24 **Town Deal – *Reconnecting Runcorn***

The *Reconnecting Runcorn* programme is a government allocation of £23.6 million running to March 2026 for the redevelopment/connectivity of the Old Town area of Runcorn. Funding is drawn down based on a spending profile or forecast and monitoring reports are required to be submitted to Government in May and October.

3.25 The programme is split into 8 strands and a brief overview of these is included below. A link is also included here to a short award-winning film which highlights the key aspects of the programme – https://youtu.be/Hkgv_f9QYzQ - and an overview

presentation at Appendix 6 which includes images of each project.

1. Elite House – Runcorn Station Quarter Enterprise Hub

HBC is currently obtaining legal and property advice on another route to secure an operator for a creative start-up hub. Some essential work is being carried out to the building, and a process to secure a contractor to carry out solar PV installation on the roof is in progress.

2. Unlock Runcorn – Landscaping, Visitor Centre and Canal Boat Trip experience.

Planning permission for the HBC landscaping and civil works has been awarded. The project is currently in RIBA stage 4 design and detailed drawings from the landscape architects are being drawn up. Runcorn Locks Restoration Society who will operate the visitor centre and canal boat trips are progressing with the appointment of a project manager and subsequently the ordering of the boats.

3. Brindley Theatre Enhancements – extended café, library and outdoor performance area

A contractor to deliver the scheme has been confirmed and plans to be on site mid-2024. The outdoor work will follow the extension.

4. Creative & Digital Skills Centre

Hazlehurst Arts Collective is now well established at 71a High Street, offering a varied and successful programme of events and workshops. 18 artists have taken up residence. A contractor for the Youth Club building had been appointed and is due to start on site in August 2024. The digital and IT hub in the Camden buildings is currently in design.

5. Town Centre New Homes – High Street

Halton Housing Association has purchased this site, and a contractor is now on site. Build should take about 12-18 months.

6. Health & Education Hub

Planning permission has been submitted for the Health & Education Hub (current library building) and work is forecast to start in Autumn 2024.

7. High Street Connectivity

The application for demolition of St Paul's Mews has been approved and the procurement of a contractor is in progress.

The Peace Garden is well underway; the Chedi has been cast in Thailand and this together with a Buddha have recently arrived onsite. There was a formal ceremony on Sunday 23rd June 2024 to celebrate the temple anniversary and Si Ra Reuk, or Pagoda Foundation ceremony.

Following a project creating a range of heritage stories, a booklet has been published. An artist is currently being procured to work on a street art commission for the pillars of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

Public realm works on High Street will be progressed towards the end of the programme.

- 3.26 For further information and regular updates, please visit www.reconnectingruncorn.info
- 3.27 A more detailed report on the Town Deal programme is due to be presented to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board's September meeting.
- 3.28 **Other projects supported in 2023-24.**
Other projects supported in 2023-24 in which the Team played a key role in securing and monitoring important grant investment to the Borough include:
- Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum - £312,499 (Arts Council England) for roof renovations
 - Open 360 - £192,071 (National Lottery Community Fund) for digital inclusion delivery
 - HBC - £291,000 (Brownfield Land Release Fund) for feasibility work on Runcorn Waterfront Housing Development
 - St Berteline's Church - £41,000 (Benefact Trust, Joseph Rank, Diocese of Chester) for reconfiguration of the church to deliver community activity.
- 3.29 The work of the Team is summarised in our Annual Funding Review which goes out to our networks – the latest version is included at Appendix 7.
- 3.30 **Capacity and Demand**
Demand for the service remains steady; the Team received 55 requests for funding in 2024-25. This is lower than the previous couple of years; however, the team is working more strategically on fewer bids but offering more in-depth support.
- 3.31 The Team works to full capacity which means decisions need to be made at times about where to allocate support, allowing the ability to respond to new enquiries and priorities, manage tight deadlines for bids, horizon scan to ensure opportunities are not missed etc.

- 3.32 Importantly, the Team does not drive projects, but specialises in sourcing funding, bid-writing and monitoring, acting as a critical friend or compliance checker.
- 3.33 Funding secured this year by the Programmes Office is £899m; this is lower than usual as the workload emphasis has been supporting with funding streams that Halton has received as an allocation, e.g. UKSPF and Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) and on the monitoring of large-scale grants e.g. Towns Fund.
- 3.34 The Team is currently monitoring projects to the value of £41 million; this is a critical role for the Programmes Office, working closely with our Finance and Internal Audit colleagues, to ensure compliance and minimize clawback.
- 3.35 **Community and Voluntary Sector**
The Programmes Office maintains a remit to support voluntary and community sector organisations to secure funding to support their services as well as help deliver Halton's strategic priorities.
- 3.36 Projects currently being supported include:
- Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum to develop a £1 million bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund to redevelop its heritage gallery and activity.
 - St Lukes Church reconfiguration for the provision of toilets
 - Autism Wellbeing Project – running costs and capital work.
 - Halton Community Transport – new bus
 - Warrington, Halton and St Helens RSPCA – running costs and capital work.
 - Sam's Diamond's Cancer Support – running costs.
- 3.37 **Liverpool City Region, Cultural/Visitor Economy and Climate Change work**
The Team continues to undertake some key work with Liverpool City Region (LCR) and Halton partners in relation to Visitor Economy, Culture and Climate Change.
- The Programmes Office sits on the LCR Destination Management Board and is currently delivering the Halton element of a SIF funded Destination Management programme.
 - The Team supports Cultivate: Halton's cultural partnership with funding bids to deliver a quality arts and cultural programme for people in Halton.
 - The Programmes Office Manager sits on the LCR Culture Officers Group which delivers LCR-wide cultural events and helps drive the Boroughs of Culture programme.
 - The Programmes Office Manager played a key role in the development of Halton's Cultural Strategy published in 2023 and which is critical in securing funding via the Arts Council of England and National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- The Programmes Office supports HBC's Climate Change Steering Group, identifying funding sources to enable the delivery of HBC's Climate Action Plan. The Team produces Climate Change Funding Bulletins periodically.

3.38 **Training**

The Team has traditionally delivered a free Training Programme which is available to HBC colleagues and externally to the voluntary and other public sector partners which consisted of the following sessions:

- Top Tips for Bid-Writing
- Monitoring and Evaluation your Grant
- Now You've Got Your Grant
- Developing a Fundraising Strategy.

3.39 The training sessions are continually updated to improve bid-writing skill levels among both internal and external colleagues and also give a greater understanding of the context in which funding bids are submitted, helping to ensure that bids are prioritised and of the highest possible quality.

3.40 The Team has prioritised delivery to HBC colleagues and so far, has run three sessions; we also offer bespoke courses to individual teams or organisations.

3.41 **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Team's workload remains extremely busy; we continue to prioritise funding that has emerged through the Government's levelling up agenda, as well as funding opportunities via the Combined Authority in order to support HBC's priorities and to ensure Halton bids for these funds where appropriate. At the same time, we will continue with our remit to support our voluntary sector colleagues to secure funding to deliver their vital services across the Borough.

3.42 The external funding environment remains vibrant, if not competitive, and we look forward to securing further investment into the Borough in the year ahead to support the corporate priorities and key strategic schemes going forward.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

All projects that request support from the Programmes Office must support at least one of the following Council's priorities:

- Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
- Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
- Supporting Children, Young People and Families
- Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
- Working Towards a Greener Future
- Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 None.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

- 1 **TAKE A SELFIE WITH A GIANT**
- 2 **SEE A TRY SCORED BY A VIKING**
- 3 **EXPERIENCE VIEWS FIT FOR A KING**
- 4 **BE VICTORIOUS AND GRAB A PHOTO WITH THE CHALLENGE CUP**
- 5 **SLALOM DOWN A SKI SLOPE**
- 6 **MEET THE MAD HATTER IN A CHURCH**
- 7 **CYCLE ALONG THE MERSEY ON THE TRANS PENNINE TRAIL**
- 8 **SING ALONG TO A SHOW AT AN AWARD-WINNING THEATRE**
- 9 **RIDE ON A VIRTUAL REALITY ROLLERCOASTER**
- 10 **DEVOUR TASTY GELATO AND DRINK AUTHENTIC ITALIAN COFFEE**
- 11 **TRY THE BURRITOS, BRATWURSTS, CRAFT & CASK ALES UNDER AN ARCHWAY**
- 12 **STROLL UNDER STATUESQUE SCOTS, CORSICAN AND LODGEPOLE PINES**
- 13 **GET INSPIRED AND HANDS-ON IN A SCIENCE LAB**
- 14 **SEEK A HIDDEN BEACH**
- 15 **GLIDE INTO A COLD EXPERIENCE**
- 16 **TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE**
- 17 **DANCE TO THE BEAT OF THE SUMMER OF 1990**
- 18 **CROSS THE FAMOUS BRIDGE TO DISCOVER THE WHOLE REGION**
- 19 **FLUTTER THROUGH A BUTTERFLY HOUSE**
- 20 **STEP ON THE STAGE WHERE GARY BARLOW TOOK HIS FIRST STEPS TO STARDOM**
- 21 **GO FULL STEAM ON A MINIATURE LOCOMOTIVE**
- 22 **VISIT THE VENUE OF ONE OF THE LARGEST DANCE MUSIC FESTIVALS**
- 23 **TUNE IN TO THE STORE WHERE THE GREATS GET THEIR GUITARS**
- 24 **RECORD YOUR OWN HIT SONG**
- 25 **EXPLORE A CAMPUS FULL OF WORLD CLASS INNOVATION**
- 26 **HAVE A PICNIC IN A PARK THAT REIGNS SUPREME**
- 27 **LIQK YOUR WAY THROUGH 12 DELICIOUS FLAVOURS**
- 28 **VISIT THE VILLAGE & BIRTHPLACE OF LEWIS CARROLL**
- 29 **HIKE AROUND A BEACHSIDE LIGHTHOUSE**
- 30 **LOOK OUT FOR BUDDHIST MONKS**
- 31 **AIRWALK HIGHER THAN A PHOENIX**
- 32 **MARVEL AT THE MOST EXCAVATED MONASTIC SITE IN EUROPE**
- 33 **GET ROARSOME AND SEE A DINOSAUR FOOTPRINT**
- 34 **GET 360° VIEWS FROM THE TOP OF CATALYST**
- 35 **ACT SAINTLY AND TRAVEL TO A PRIORY**
- 36 **STEP UP TO A FAMOUS PULPIT**
- 37 **LOOK OUT FOR RAIDING AIRSHIPS AND STAND PROUD NEXT TO THE VICTORIA CROSS STATUE**
- 38 **APPRECIATE SOME ARTWORK AT HAZELHURST STUDIOS**
- 39 **SCALE NEW HEIGHTS AND CLIMB HIGHER**
- 40 **TAKE A BREATH AT THE TRAVELLER'S REST STONE SEAT**
- 41 **PAT & SIT ON THE FAMOUS PIGS**
- 42 **ESCAPE TO AN ISLAND TO MEET A FAIRY AND A HOG**
- 43 **WALK OVER THE BRIDGEWATER CANAL**
- 44 **VISIT THE CHURCH FOUNDED BY ETHELFLEDA**
- 45 **TAKE A WALK TO A GRADE II LISTED WATER TOWER**
- 46 **PEEK INTO THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR**
- 47 **HAVE A TEA PARTY ON THE ALFRESCO TERRACE**
- 48 **TAKE A RANGER TOUR AROUND AN ECO PARK**
- 49 **SEE WHERE THE BLACKSMITH GRIFFIN IS BURIED**
- 50 **SEE THE SETS OF TWO PINTS OF LAGER AND A PACKET OF CRISPS**



QUIRKY THINGS YOU CAN ONLY DO IN HALTON

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF HALTON

BY COMPLETING ALL OF OUR 50 QUIRKY THINGS TO SEE AND DO...

Discover Halton's 50 greatest sites in the borough of Northwest, England. A rural hinterland boasting a range of fascinating attractions, renowned heritage and beautiful natural landscapes that draw visitors from across the UK. Whether you're a history buff, a nature enthusiast, or simply looking for a getaway filled with surprises, this hidden gem in the heart of the Northwest is well worth a visit.



1 CHILDE OF HALE

6 Church End, Hale, Liverpool L24 4AX
John Middleton was known as the giant of Hale. Allegedly 9 feet and 3 inches tall. You can visit his statue and see how giant he really was in real life!

6 THE LEWIS CARROLL CENTRE

All Saint's Church, Daresbury, Warrington WA4 4AE
A striking and unusual stained glass window made in 1935 with illustrations from the story of Alice in Wonderland.

11 SOCIETY TAP ROOMS

33 Ashridge St, Runcorn WA7 1HU
A bar full of refreshing beers and tasty bites - wry out the burritos, bratwursts, craft and cask ales under an archway.

16 PICKERING'S PASTURE

Mersey View Rd, Widnes WA8 8LP
Local Nature Reserve with acres of wild flower meadows and a fabulous view across the Upper Mersey Estuary. It is a peaceful place to enjoy picnics and watch the abundant wildlife.

2 DCBL STADIUM

Lower House Ln, Widnes WA8 7DZ
Home of the rugby league side Widnes Vikings of the Betfred Championship. The stadium is all seater and has a total capacity of 13,350.

7 TRANS PENNINE TRAIL

Widnes, Runcorn WA4 6XA
A great route to take your bike out and cycle along the Mersey river, sighting beautiful views on the way.

12 DARESURY FIRS

Daresbury Tower, Keckwick Ln, Warrington WA4 4AB
Stroll under statuesque Scots, Corsican and Lodgepole pine. Daresbury is a charming village steeped with history waiting to be discovered.

17 SPIKE ISLAND

Upper Mersey Rd, Widnes WA8 0DG
Go and explore the island with its footpaths, cycle paths, canal walks, woodland and wetlands. Take in the views of the River Mersey.

3 HALTON CASTLE

Castle Road, Runcorn WA7 2BE
Located on top of Halton Hill - the castle was originally built out of wooden motte-and-bailey, then replaced by sandstone which is still standing.

8 THE BRINDLEY

High St, Runcorn WA7 1BG
An award winning theatre in Runcorn with amazing performances you can sing along to.

13 CATALYST

Mersey Rd, Widnes WA8 0DF
The Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum is an interactive experience with exhibits, reconstructed scenes, science shows and hands-on workshops for all ages.

18 SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE

Runcorn WA8 0DT
Walk along the circular route around the island on the wide paths that lead under the Mersey Gateway Bridge and witness spectacular views of the iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge.

4 WIDNES VIKINGS

Lower House Ln, Widnes WA8 7DZ
Described as 'Cup Kings' claiming the Challenge Cup 7 times. If you're lucky you may be able to take a picture with their Viking mascot.

9 VR WAREHOUSE

Unit 31 Percival Ln, Runcorn WA7 4UX
Experience the thrill of virtual reality with places that can literally take you out of this world.

14 OGLET SHORE

Oglet Shore, Hale, Speke, Liverpool L24 5RJ
Take a walk along Paul McCartney's favourite childhood beach.

19 BUTTERFLY HOUSE

Birchfield Rd, Widnes WA8 7SU
Flutter through a tropical oasis in the glasshouse full of butterflies at Victoria Park.

5 RUNCORN SKI CENTRE

Town Park, Stockham Ln, Palacefields, Runcorn WA7 6PT
Offers many activities and lessons such as; skiing, snowboarding and tubing.

10 ESPOSITO'S CAFÉ

Fairfield Rd, Widnes WA8 6SQ
Devour tasty gelato and drink authentic Italian coffee, shipped from Tuscany at Esposito's Café in Victoria Park and Runcorn Hill.

15 PLANET ICE

Earle Rd, Widnes WA8 0TA
Europe's No 1 for ice leisure in Widnes. Glide into a cool experience at Planet Ice and show off your skating skills!

20 HRB LEGION CLUB

Castle Rd, Halton, Runcorn WA7 2BE
Step on the stage where Gary Barlow took his first steps to stardom.

21 MINIATURE RAILWAY

Town Park, Stockham Ln, Runcorn WA7 6PT
Go full steam on a miniature locomotive.

27 DARESURY DAIRY

Penkridge Lake Farm, Newton Ln WA4 4HZ
Treat your taste buds to their seasonal special ice cream flavours.

33 DINOSAUR'S FOOTPRINT

Highlands Rd, Runcorn WA7 4PT
Visit Runcorn Hill Park built on a sandstone hill. Pick up a coffee from Espositos while you are there and look out for a dinosaur's footprint!

39 UPTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Hough Green Road, Widnes WA8 4PF
Scale new heights and climb higher on Upton's Community Centre's climbing wall.

45 NORTON WATER TOWER

Norton, Runcorn WA7 6PX
Take a walk to a Grade II listed Water Tower.

22 CREAMFIELDS

1 Hall Ln Daresbury Warrington WA4 4AF
Take a stroll around Moore and pass by the site of the world famous Creamfields Music Festival.

28 DARESURY VILLAGE

WA4 4AE
Daresbury is a charming village steeped in history and creativity. The childhood home of Lewis Carroll, Daresbury offers a diverse range of attractions for visitors of all ages.

34 THE OBSERVATORY GALLERY

Mersey Rd, Widnes WA8 0DF
Enjoy 360 views from the top of 'Catalyst' Science Discovery Centre and Museum.

40 TRAVELLER'S REST STONE

Daresbury, junction of Chester Road and Newton Lane
Take a breather at the Traveller's Rest Stone seat in Daresbury.

46 MAYOR'S PARLOUR

Heath Rd, Runcorn WA7 5TD
Have a peek in the Mayor's Parlour in the Runcorn Town Hall. Look out for open days!

23 FRAILER'S

89 Church St, Runcorn WA7 1LG
Tune in to the store where the greats get their guitars.

29 THE LIGHTHOUSE

Church Rd, Hale, Liverpool L24 4AZ
The Hale Head Lighthouse overlooks the beaches and salt marsh of the picturesque coastline.

35 ST CHRISTOPHER STATUE

Tudor Rd, Windmill Hill, Runcorn WA7 1SX
Travel to the Priory to see a saintly statue.

41 NORTON PIG STATUE

Tudor Rd, Windmill Hill, Runcorn WA7 1SX
Pat and sit on the famous pig statues.

47 ALFRESCO TERRACE

High St, Runcorn WA7 1BG
Try the famous afternoon tea at The Brindley.

24 THE STUDIO

Lacey St, Widnes WA8 7SQ
Once part of the Queens Hall, a space for all things sound that hosts live events, rehearsal rooms and recording studio.

30 THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE

88 High St, Runcorn WA7 1JH
In need of some zen? Visit the Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre in Runcorn.

36 FAMOUS PULPIT

St. Mary's Road West Bank, Widnes Cheshire, WA8 0DP
Step up to the famous pulpit at the West Bank Church in Widnes.

42 WIGG ISLAND

Runcorn WA7 1LU
This historic nature reserve is positioned between the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. You might spot a fairy and a hog.

25 SCI-TECH

Keckwick Ln, Daresbury, WA4 4FS
Explore a campus full of world class innovation and look out for opening days.

31 PHOENIX SKATEPARK

Phoenix Park Ave, Castlefields, WA7 2LW
Take out your skateboard and airwalk higher than a phoenix.

37 BOMBED MILESTONE

Birchfield Rd, Widnes WA8 7SU
Look out for raiding airships from the Bombed Milestone of the Zeppelin Air Raids of WW1 in Victoria Park, and Stand proud next to the Statues of Victoria Cross holders.

43 BRIDGEWATER CANAL

Runcorn WA7 1AB
Make your mark on the Bridgewater Canal nature trail.

49 ST LUKE'S CHURCH

Pit Ln, Widnes WA8 9HU
See the holy site where the Blacksmith who slew the Griffin is buried.

26 VICTORIA PARK

Birchfield Rd, Widnes WA8 7SU
Have a picnic in a park that reigns supreme whilst enjoying the stunning views of nature.

32 NORTON PRIORY

Tudor Rd, Windmill Hill, Runcorn WA7 1SX
One of Halton's hidden gems. Once home to a medieval church, this is the most excavated monastic site in Europe.

38 HAZLEHURST STUDIOS

73a High St, Cheshire, Runcorn WA7 1AH
Visit the studio where local Artists are working within the community, offering a range of skills, training, and workshops.

44 ALL SAINTS CHURCH

All Saints Church, Daresbury WA4 4AE
Visit the church founded by Ethelreda, Lady of the Mercians.

50 TWO PINTS OF LAGER AND A PACKET OF CRISPS TV SETS

Runcorn WA7 1AB
Seek out the sets of the sitcom 'Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps' in Runcorn Village.



WIN A PRIZE EVERY MONTH FOR 12 MONTHS*

Take a picture of yourself doing any of the 50 Quirky Things, then POST and TAG Visit Halton's Social Media using the hashtag #HaltonHighlights.

@visithalton



A lucky winner will be drawn randomly each month and win one Prize from a Bonanza of Borough Wide Rewards. So, what are you waiting for! Get snapping and sharing all of the 50 Quirky Things that you've seen and done!

VISITHALTON.CO.UK

*The prize will be drawn randomly during the following month. The prize will need to be redeemed before January 2025. The competition will run from January 2024 to December 2024. The prize cannot be resold or exchanged. For full terms and conditions go to visithalton.co.uk



VISIT
HALTON

HALTON HIGHLIGHTS

Issue 2



GET A *TASTE* OF HALTON

TASTE
HALTON

CAFÉ
CULTURE

FEEL GOOD
FOOD

A CULINARY
JOURNEY



WELCOME

A MESSAGE FROM CONNOR SLATER

I'm Connor Slater, I grew up in Runcorn amongst a family of food lovers. From cooking with my grandparents and Auntie to training at Halton's Riverside College, Centre of Excellence in Catering & Hospitality, working as Head Chef at Michelin Star Restaurant Mana in Manchester and currently Sous Chef at two-Michelin-starred restaurant, Da Terra, in London. When it comes to food and hospitality, my passion is always about striving to push forward, develop what we do and get better every day. To be recognised for that hard work with a Michelin Star is one of the best feelings in the world.

I am delighted to write the foreword for Halton's first hospitality guide. In an area that spans over 34 square miles there's plenty to feast on, the borough of Halton brings the flavour game to a whole new level. From the coastline of the Mersey Estuary to the thriving countryside. All nestled between the cities of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester, it's the place that blends culture, heritage and nature with a community welcome.

You might know the area as the inspiration and setting for the cult classic 'Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps', but you'll find there's much more on tap these days, including artisan cafés & bakeries, vertical farming walls, dog friendly delis, fine foods and produce passed down

from generations of family traditions - and that's just for starters. Get a taste of Halton on your own foodie adventure, spoonfuls of fresh ice cream straight from the dairy or experience a taste from around the world.

Whether you're a local or a visitor, Taste Halton is your guide to 'sauce' the culinary highlights and mouth-watering delights. From our charming café culture to Halton's very own home-grown heroes. Tuck in and take a bite of everything on offer around the borough.

This bite sized brochure will hopefully serve as an appetizer before you visit, then you can dig in and sample our whole borough for yourself.

HOT
HOT
HOT

TASTE
HALTON

GRAB LIFE BY
THE FORK

SATISFY YER'
CRAVINGS

CONTENTS

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Find out what's brewing and discover some of the independent cafés in Halton. Read our hints and tips on where to find both the café and the culture in the borough.

FEEL GOOD FOOD 16

There are lots of good mood foods to find in Halton, from the sustainable field to fork, supper clubs and artisan ice creams. Get the scoop on where to go for that feel good food fix.

A CULINARY JOURNEY 26

With its waterways and links to the ports, Halton has an affinity with foods from afar that have made the journey to the borough. Discover how history has made an impact on Halton's food scene.

MORE ON TAP 38

Discover even more secret spots, all selected by some of Halton's most dedicated foodies!

HALTON HAPPENINGS 42

Find out the latest goings on in Halton, to get the perfect pairing for your latest foodie expedition.

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DELISH

YUM!



CAFÉ CULTURE

The café scene in Halton is becoming as bold as their blends. Whether you're just after a much-needed caffeine hit, or looking for a spot to catch up, we've got the guide to find the finest grinds.

From authentic Italian coffee shipped direct from Tuscany to a classic British brew, everyone's tastes are catered for and can be found somewhere in this borough. Whether it is independent coffee shops in the heart of the community, to cafés within unique spaces found in some of the area's cultural hot spots, you will find your firm favourite. Looking for that laid back vibe, a puppuccino for your pooch or are you a lover of an indulgent cake served with your catch up, there is something for everyone.

Halton's café culture is best served with Halton's art and culture, it is the perfect pairing. Halton's arts and cultural menu is extensive - from enjoying live performances and gigs at small intimate venues, to the stadium shows. There is also a legendary guitar shop in Runcorn, that many famous faces get their instruments from.

Looking for something more zen? Runcorn has a Buddhist temple which hosts mediation sessions, the right blend before a chai latte at one of the independent coffee shops in the Old Town.

PAIRS WELL WITH...

Looking for the perfect pairing? We've selected some of Halton's best offerings, which go hand in hand with our Café Culture picks...

1 Home made crafted cakes and bakes go well with an afternoon of arts and crafts at Hazlehurst Studios. hazlehurststudios.co.uk

2 Get your caffeine fix with some perfectly roasted blends before getting your cultural fix at The Brindley theatre.

3 Afternoon Tea pairs well with exploring the heritage of Halton's legendary science and music scene at Catalyst Science Discovery Centre.

DIG IN!



THE WHOLE OF THE SPOON

82 Pit Ln, Widnes WA8 9HW

Independent café, The Whole of The Spoon, is located in the village of Farnworth in Widnes and is popular with the locals and visitors to the area. The coffee shop is well known for its laid back atmosphere, friendly staff as well as its menu! Whether it's a medium roast coffee, assorted teas, iced latte, hot chocolate, milkshake or smoothie you want to sip on – they serve it all.

The selection of cakes from local bakery, Emma's Bakery, will leave you spoilt for choice. But be quick, as they sell out fast. Satisfy your sweet tooth with their sumptuous brownies, blondies, chocolate truffle cake or school cake and everything in between – the choices are endless and a reason to return and try them all. They also have an extensive breakfast and lunch menu, from bagels to paninis and hot buttered toast, everything to keep you full all day.

There is also a book swap shelf, with lots of choice of different genres – so take down a book you have read and swap for a new one from the shelf. You can start it whilst enjoying a treat.

With ample outdoor and indoor seating, friendly service and relaxed atmosphere, it is the perfect pit stop for all the family, including the four-legged members who are also welcome to enjoy a puppuccino.



OPEN HOURS

Mon - Fri
8:00 - 16:00
Sat - Sun
9:00 - 16:00

THE TERRACE CAFÉ

High St, Runcorn WA7 1BG

When going to The Brindley Theatre's Terrace Café, you can enjoy relaxing views of the Bridgewater Canal, and watch the world go by. Whether you are meeting friends and family for a catch-up, or a bite to eat before watching a performance, you won't be disappointed.

Enjoy freshly home-cooked food, as well as a choice of daily specials. There is a selection of delicious cakes, and the scones are now legendary! If you like to indulge in afternoon tea, where better to enjoy it than at the Terrace Café? (Be sure to book in advance!) In the summer, there is also an outdoor seating area, a lovely spot to soak up the views and the wildlife.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Brindley Theatre is undergoing building work from June 2024 for 22 months. This will include a large café-restaurant and enhancing the Brindley Green to make it welcoming and accessible for all. Please check business hours during this period.

IN THE MOOD FOR FOOD

IN THE LIMELIGHT



OPEN HOURS

Weekdays
11:00 - 15:00

The Terrace Café is open one hour before most performances.



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DELISH!

LUNCH & LEARN
TASTY!

CATALYST CAFÉ

Mersey Road, Widnes WA8 0DF

Spike Island is famous for the legendary Stone Roses gig that took place in the 90s. This man-made island is now home to the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum, which is housed in a Grade II listed building. They host interactive exhibitions and workshops, as well as being home to a lovely café, which you can enjoy without paying admission into Catalyst if you're out and about, exploring Spike Island.

You'll be greeted by warm and welcoming staff and a tasty selection of snacks and drinks to choose from. Grab a drink and take in the scenic views of Spike Island, the River Mersey, and the Mersey Gateway Bridge. If bringing the kids or grandkids, they will be kept entertained with the play area outside of the café.

For a special treat, book a Heritage Afternoon Tea, served in the glass-walled Observatory Gallery, with stunning views over the surrounding

area. Afternoon teas can be booked on weekdays in term time, from Tuesday to Friday and include admission to the Catalyst galleries with all dietary requirements catered for.

DID YOU KNOW?

On the first Sunday of each month at 13:00, Catalyst hosts a free Dementia Café, offering a place to socialise with people in similar situations, in a relaxed setting. Sessions are drop-in, so there is no need to book.

OPEN HOURS

Tuesday - Sunday
10:00 - 16:00

Plus Mondays on
bank / school holidays

TREAT YOURSELF

GIVE IT SOME (COFFEE) BEANS

HOT HOT HOT

THE COFFEE HOUSE

Shopping City, Palacefields, Runcorn WA7 2GX

The Coffee House is a chain of independent coffee shops located across the North West, with one situated in Runcorn's Shopping City. You can take advantage of the free parking in Halton and visit the coffee shop. They serve a special blend of coffee that is roasted in-house and has a well-rounded medium roast, this is a must try for the cofficionado.

For the non-coffee drinkers, the hot chocolate is worth a mention as is the range of teas and chilled drinks. The food menu has plenty of tempting options for both breakfast and lunch, from buttery croissants and sausage muffins to granola yoghurt pots and toasties oozing with cheese. Not to mention the salads, fresh sandwich choices and their speciality mac and cheese - it's easy to see why you might come in for coffee and end up staying for lunch. It's not just the menu that makes it so great, it's also the friendly staff and great service that make it a firm favourite.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Coffee House' also have another location in Widnes!
83 Widnes Rd, Widnes WA8 6BJ



OPEN HOURS

Monday - Saturday
8:30 - 17:30

Sunday
9:30 - 16:00



FANCY A
BREW?

THAT'S
THE
TEA

BREW LANE

170 Milton Rd, Widnes WA8 7JP

Nestled behind the DCBL Stadium, Brew Lane is a great addition to Widnes. This independent coffee shop is owned by Widnes-born Tom Gilmore who also plays for Widnes Vikings as scrum half.

A rugby player knows that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and **Brew Lane is renowned for its delicious breakfasts**. Whether you prefer a veggie full brekkie, eggs benedict with smoked salmon, a full English or just a slice of toast, you'll find the portions generous and made with high-quality produce. The lunch menu is varied and includes burgers, toasties, fresh salads and more. Don't forget to check out the daily specials.

The afternoon tea is definitely worth a shout-out, you'll want your camera ready before indulging in the insta-worthy assortment. The cakes and treats on offer are hard to resist - from the soft and gooey brownies to muffins, cookies and waffles, there's so much on offer to hit that sweet spot.

The selection of hot drinks is impressive, and the coffee used in the shop can also be bought to enjoy at home - whether it is whole beans, ground or decaff.

Whether you are heading to the DCBL Stadium for a game or a catch up with friends, be sure to head to Brew Lane for your coffee fix.



DIG IN!



OPEN HOURS

Monday - Friday
7:00 - 15:00

Saturday
8:00 - 13:00

SATISFY YER'
CRAVINGS

DOG
FRIENDLY

THE SHED

Runcorn Rd, Moore, WA4 6TU

The Shed is based in the heart of the picturesque village of Moore and is located close to many nature trails and cycle paths, making it the perfect meeting spot. Whether you are heading out for a stroll, run, hike, cycle ride or walk with the dog, The Shed is a great spot to meet, or head to, as a pit stop to refuel.

With a large car park and outdoor seating, you can sit in the sun and enjoy the wildlife whilst sipping on coffee, tea or hot chocolate. If you'd prefer to sit inside, you'll be greeted by a warm and cosy atmosphere. **Dogs are more than welcome, with free puppuccinos that are sure to get their tails wagging.**

The menu is full of fresh produce and cakes and bakes, coffee and speciality teas, as well as a selection of cold drinks. Why not try an iced honey black americano to kick-start your day? If you go for lunch, there is a huge choice of toasted sandwiches to choose from as well as vegan and veggie options too. Head out and enjoy a walk along the Bridgewater Canal. Take some paper and a pencil and follow the wildlife stations to stencil along the way.



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OPEN HOURS

Mon - Sat
8:00 - 16:30

Sunday
10:00 - 16:00





CHI CAFÉ

Phoenix Park Ave, Castlefields, Runcorn WA7 2LW

An Interview with Philip Thornton, Manager of CHI Café.

How did CHI Community Café start up?

Back in 2018, we started Creative Health Initiatives (CHI) as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company. Our aim was to improve all aspects of health and wellbeing by offering a range of creative, physical and social activities. With the help of Windmill Hill Big Local, we refurbished the café and opened it as CHI Community Café in October 2019.

With it being a not-for-profit organisation, how is it run?

We are a small team which includes volunteers from the local area who are trained in food hygiene and preparation, barista skills and customer service. Without the help of the volunteers, it wouldn't be possible to run and open the café.

What is on the menu?

With this being a café for the community, it is important that the items are not only delicious but affordable too. Customers can enjoy homemade cakes, as well as breakfast and lunch items. One of our remits is to support local businesses so we buy Wirral based Adams & Russell

blended coffee beans as well as a range of delicious Cheshire Farm ice creams.

And you're dog friendly too?

Being in a park, we get lots of dog walkers and have always been dog friendly with free dog treats and we have been known to treat with the odd sausage. Pooches of all sizes are most welcome in the café.

How are you different from the high street coffee chains?

Making our customers feel valued is really important to us. All our staff take the time to talk to our customers and create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. We are also proud to have the only fully accessible changing room and toilet in Runcorn, which is important but not widely available.



"Being a café for the community, it is important that the items are not only delicious but affordable too!"

So what these community activities, what are they all about?

The purpose of the café is to improve the wellbeing of the residents. We have a large community room, which we run a programme of free events and activities from.

We have also been providing free school holiday activities and food (HAF) for children eligible for free school meals and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities for four years.

We also fund SEND and young people's activities through our lottery funded 'Parklife' project. We are also able to support local creatives by displaying photography and art works in the café.

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration: visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit



SO MUCH MORE TO TASTE

Make the most of your time in Halton and visit some of the Halton Highlights whilst out and about tasting all that Halton has to offer...

1 The Shed

Runcorn Road
Moore, WA4 6TU

theshedmoore.com
IG: [the_shed_moore](#)

4 Brew Lane

170 Milton Road
Widnes, WA8 7JP

0752 247 1430
IG: [brew.lane](#)

7 The Whole of the Spoon

82 Pit Lane
Widnes, WA8 9HW

IG: [wholeofthespoon](#)
Sign up to the mailing list and get 10% off!

2 Hazlehurst Studios

73A High Street
Runcorn, WA7 1AH

hazlehurststudios.co.uk
IG: [hazlehurst](#)
FB: [hazlehurstart](#)

5 The Coffee House

Shopping City
Palacefields, WA7 2GX

0192 871 6363
coffeehouseonline.co.uk

8 Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum

Mersey Road
Widnes, WA8 0DF

0151 420 1121
catalyst.org.uk

3 CHI Community Café

Phoenix Park Ave
Castlefields, WA7 2LW

chi-community-cafe.org

6 The Terrace Café

The Brindley,
High Street, Runcorn
WA7 1BG

0151 907 8360
IG: [thebrindleytheatre](#)

SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT...

If you would like to learn new skills in preparing fresh, healthy meals then check out Fresh Beginnings. They offer hands on classes, that teach you how to prepare home cooked meals from scratch. It's a great way to gain confidence and learn new ways to cook! Find out more at visithalton.co.uk/food-drink





FEEL GOOD FOOD

We all want to feel like we are making better choices, especially with our food. Whether it is looking at healthier options, sustainable produce to reduce your carbon footprint or choosing an eatery which has a positive impact on the community. All these factors dish up a serving of good-mood food, that makes it taste even better.

From cafés embracing new and innovative farming methods, powered by renewable energy, to growing methods that avoid the use of chemicals and pesticides, to reducing the carbon footprint of produce, Halton has them all. The feel-good food in Halton is best enjoyed with a serving of wide-open spaces and nature.

What better way to enjoy all this healthy, delicious food, than to get out and about in the borough? We've got Green Flag parks, Trans-Pennine Trails, waterways and cycle paths to get around the region. There are 106 cycle routes and the green belt covers approximately one-third of the land in the borough. If you're a fan of open spaces to explore, we have 10 local nature reserves, 47 local wildlife sites and 12 open spaces of Green Flag standard, so there are plenty of ways to get out and about in Liverpool's rural hinterland to keep you feeling good for longer.

PAIRS WELL WITH...

After another perfect pairing? We've chosen some of Halton's best offerings, which go perfectly with our Feel Good Food picks...

1 Artisan ice cream is best enjoyed with a walk along the many pathways, cycleways and bridleways in the area.

2 Homemade cakes and bakes made with homegrown produce is the perfect fuel before an adrenaline filled activity such as hitting the dry slope or ice skating.

3 Eat your greens and then get out in the Green Flag parks found in Halton.

GOOD
FOOD
GOOD
MOOD

COMMUNITY
FUELLED

HEATH CAFÉ

The Heath Business and Technical Park, Heath Rd,
Weston, Runcorn WA7 4QX

Heath Café is a unique addition, as it is located in a business park. Heath Park is committed to community well-being and creating a sustainable and net zero environment for future generations.

From the friendly staff and high-quality service to the delicious daily specials, there is lots of reasons to return. Take advantage of the free Wi-Fi while you tuck into your breakfast or lunch.

If you are getting a takeaway, all refreshments are served in environmentally friendly containers which can either be reused, recycled or is compostable or biodegradable.

The community is at the very core of The Heath, **with the popular Eat @ The Heath Community Group meetings.** These are open to everyone and are a great way to socialise and make new friends. The weekly meetings are every Wednesday 11:30 - 13:30 and the monthly meeting is the last Wednesday of the month which includes a two course meal and entertainment. Booking is required.

Find out more at
theheath.com/community



OPEN HOURS

Monday - Friday
8:00 - 16:00

Breakfast from
8:00 - 10:30

Lunch from
11:30 - 14:00

DID YOU KNOW?

An edible wall will be returning to Heath Café in late 2024. Customers will be able to pick leafy greens that are grown using pioneering hydroponic vertical farming technology.

TREAT
YOURSELF

LEGENDARY
EATS

THE BROOKE CAFÉ AT NORTON PRIORY

Tudor Rd, Windmill Hill, Runcorn WA7 1SX

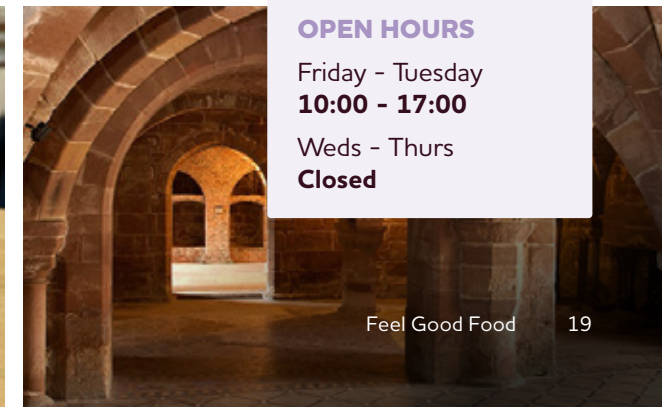
Norton Priory Museum & Gardens is a great place to visit, with its stunning Undercroft, St Christopher Statue and artefacts on display and its beautiful walled gardens. Let's not forget Brooke Café, which is worthy of a visit in its own right. It is operated by Halton Community Day Services on behalf of Norton Priory.

The Community Day Service supports adults with learning disabilities, mental health, and physical and sensory disabilities to learn and develop valuable employment skills. **The café's team is made up of professional caterers as well as those supported by the service.** They are all extremely friendly and helpful, providing excellent service.

With an extensive menu, from freshly cooked breakfast dishes and sandwiches to a full lunch menu with homemade soups and quiches. There is something for

everyone and all excellent value for money. Looking for something sweet? You'll find it hard to resist the cakes, which are baked fresh on-site. You can also buy **Priory Ale in the café, which is brewed in the grounds at Norton Priory** and is a must try for any ale lovers.

The café produces its own ice cream which can be bought in the café. Also, fruits and vegetables from the walled garden are used in the dishes and cakes served at the café. **For chocolate lovers, the luxury hot chocolate is choccolicious!**



OPEN HOURS

Friday - Tuesday
10:00 - 17:00

Weds - Thurs
Closed



FIELD 28

Chester Rd, Daresbury WA4 5LR

An Interview with Jan Dobbs, owner of Field 28.

What inspired you to start Field 28?

During COVID pandemic in 2020, restaurants were forced to close. The produce that was growing for restaurants and chefs would have been wasted, unless we could find an outlet for it. We decided to start a veg box scheme that could be enjoyed by many local people, whilst avoiding waste.

When the world returned to normal a number of customers continued to enjoy the convenience of the veg box but for others, they preferred to return to a shopping experience, encouraging us to create a small farm shop for them to visit. With the addition of a deli kitchen and Bakery, the field chefs use the fresh veg and salad to make deli items which are available in the shop and cafe.

What kind of produce do you offer?

We continue to offer our veg boxes which showcase a journey of seasonal items grown at Field28. In addition to our fresh produce and English Flowers grown on the farm the shop has a range of pantry items, fresh cheese, our own freshly

baked bread and pastries and recently the local Daresbury Ice cream. The Deli café @ Field28 offers a range and homemade items both sweet and savoury served with a range of hot and cold drinks.

So what makes Field 28 unique?

At Field 28, we take pride in using growing methods which always produce high-quality veg, salad micro greens and English flowers without the use of pesticides and biocides. We use a no-dig technique that allows us to ensure that the soil we grow in is improved with each year to preserve its goodness.

Once a month our doors remain open after hours for a Chef and Growers seed to plate dinner using the delicious produce that we grow. In addition to our supper clubs, we also host a series

"Our Seed to Plate Supper Club, showcases the delicious produce that we grow."



of events throughout the year - from growing experiences to fine dining.'

What is something that makes you proud to part of Field 28?

We are proud that our diversity and determination to make Field 28 succeed provides employment for several talented team members and we are extremely grateful to the local people and neighbours who have become valuable customers and really seem to enjoy visiting.

OPEN HOURS

Mon - Tues	Weds - Fri
10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 17:00
Saturday	Sunday
10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 15:00

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration: visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit



DARESBUURY DAIRY

Penkridge Lake Farm, Newton Lane, Daresbury WA4 4HZ

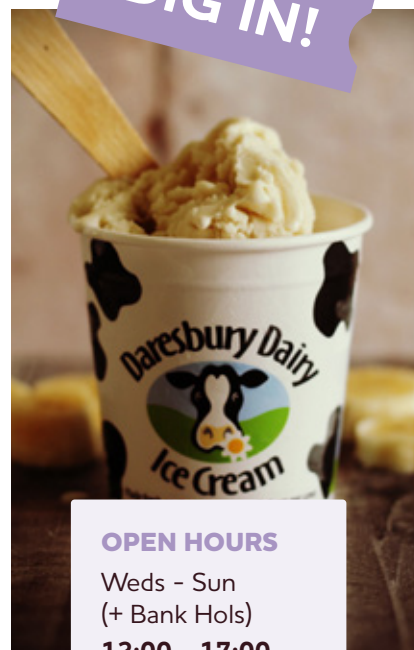
An Interview with Claire, Owner of Daresbury Dairy

Can you tell us about Daresbury Dairy and the inspiration behind it?

My husband's family have run a dairy farm in the beautiful setting of Daresbury for many generations. Having worked in a marketing role in the food and drink industry I was really inspired by quality, locally sourced ingredients and produce, but with zero experience in making ice cream I took a complete leap of faith to create the best quality ice cream. And armed with a plan and determination, we converted a calf shed into a manufacturing room. We carry the milk across the yard to be pasteurised and then to be made into our ice cream, which can be purchased here at the farm.

What makes Daresbury Dairy ice cream different?

Our beloved Friesian cows graze on the lush pastures and provide us with fresh milk. We only use the finest ingredients and where possible we use fresh fruit for our flavours, to retain the quality and integrity of our ice cream. At the shop we have



OPEN HOURS

Weds - Sun
(+ Bank Hols)
12:00 - 17:00

"Each artisan batch of Multi Award Winning Daresbury Ice Cream is inspired by quality, locally sourced ingredients and produce."

a scoop cabinet with 12 flavours and around half of these flavours are best sellers that remain on the menu constantly.

We change the rest with various specials. Many of our ice creams are gluten-free and we also make dairy-free sorbets too.

How do you create new flavours for your ice cream?

I am inspired by the seasons, sourcing fresh and readily available produce to be puréed. Because we create small artisan batches, we're able to adapt and create new flavours considering trends, customer requests and national occasions such as Hot Cross Bun flavour at Easter to Mince Pie or Cherry and Amaretto at Christmas. Some of the more unusual

requests include a delicious Lychee flavour to the more unusual Buckwheat flavour – that was an interesting process to get the balance of flavour right, but we did it.

Are you open all-year-round?

We are currently open Wednesday to Sunday and bank holidays. Customers can sit and enjoy ice cream from our scoop cabinet whilst sitting at our picnic benches overlooking the pond or purchase a pack to take home.

In winter months our opening hours do reduce (and we close in January) so it's always best to double check on our website.

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration: visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit



SO MUCH MORE TO **TASTE**

Get the endorphins flowing as you make your way around Halton trying the good mood foods...

1 Heath Café

Heath Road
Runcorn
WA7 4QX

0192 824 9883
theheath.com
FB: TheHeathCafe

4 Growing @ Field 28

Chester Road
Daresbury
WA4 5LR

0192 574 0685
field28.com
IG: growingfield28

7 Planet Ice

Earle Road
Widnes
WA8 0TA

0151 420 7930
planet-ice.co.uk

2 The Brooke Café @ Norton Priory

Tudor Road
Windmill Hill
WA7 1SX

0192 856 9895
nortonpriory.org
/cafe.php
FB: NortonPriory

5 Daresbury Dairy

Newton Lane
Daresbury
WA4 4HZ

daresburydairy.co.uk

8 Victoria Park

Birchfield Rd
WA8 7SU

3 Runcorn Hill Park

Highland Road
Runcorn
WA7 4PT

6 Runcorn Ski Centre

Town Park
Stockham Lane
WA7 6PT

0192 870 1965
runcornski.weebly.com





A CULINARY JOURNEY

Halton is a part of Liverpool's City Region and has been connected to Liverpool docks since the 18th Century, which in turn had a significant impact on the development of the area which started the Chemical Revolution.

The docks also brought flavours from around the world, with tea, coffee and spice merchants making their way into the area which influenced local food and tastes.

Runcorn boasts one of the oldest delis in the country, with the first shop opening in 1884, listed as a tea and coffee merchant, grocer and provisions dealer.

With new flavours came new beginnings, as families migrated to the area, bringing with them new foods and recipes. These have become a staple ingredient within Halton's food offerings, such as authentic Italian coffee from Tuscany to the smells and flavours of Thailand, you are transported to far-flung places with every bite.

As you take a culinary journey around the borough, take a trip through Halton's surprising and rich heritage which includes, giants, castles, saints and a chemical revolution... there is lots to be savoured.

PAIRS WELL WITH...

After another perfect pairing? We've chosen some of Halton's best offerings for a Culinary Journey around the region...

1 A feast of famous continental meats and cheeses is best served with a historical feast exploring a castle for stunning views.

2 Sip on the authentic Italian coffee and then get a historical fix in the charming village of Hale with its thatched roofs and Childe of Hale statue.

3 Taste faraway flavours and then take a moment to wander through Halton's very own Wonderland and learn the history of Lewis Carroll.



ESPOSITO'S

Victoria Park, Birchfield Road, Widnes, WA8 7SU
81 Highlands Road, Runcorn WA7 4PT

An Interview with Danny, the owner of Esposito's.

How did Esposito's start up?

We started with ice cream vans back in the 70's, when my Dad came over from Italy. I then joined him in the 90's and worked with him in the parks. We then evolved in 2015, when we got an opportunity to tender for an Ice Cream Parlour in Victoria Park. We were successful, and it was from then we began to evolve and branched out into coffee and our cafés. We won the tender for our Runcorn Hill Park café, followed by our Mill Dam Park, Kirkby location in 2021. We have now just opened our latest branch in Court Hey Park in Huyton in 2023.

Is your gelato still as popular as it was in the 70's?

Yes! Our gelato is one of our best sellers. It's authentic Italian gelato, we import high-quality ingredients from Italy to make small batches, using all great ingredients for our flavours.

Can you recommend any signature dishes or drinks that first-time visitors must try?

Definitely try our coffee if you like coffee, it's imported from Tuscany in Italy. We also have



"We import high-quality ingredients from Italy to make small batches of our gelato."



homemade cakes which we sell using all great ingredients. I'd of course try our gelato too. If you're still hungry, or looking for something more filling, I'd recommend our toasted Artisan Sandwiches made on Italian bread. We have some delicious flavours made with high-quality butchers' meats and cheeses - we also have vegetarian options too.

What makes you unique compared to others in the area?

We are English-Italian, so there is an Italian feel to it with the coffee, gelato, and bread. But we have English-style cakes which we make that go down well. We bring the best of Italian and the best of English together, I think that's what makes us unique!

OPEN HOURS

Monday - Sunday 9:00 - 17:00

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration:
visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit

LOCAL
FAVOURITE

GOOD
FOOD
GOOD
MOOD

KEEPING IT IN
THE FAMILY

DELISH!

MONKS DELI

2 Granville Street Runcorn WA7 1NE

Family run deli with five generations of expertise. Serving up German cured meats, French cheeses and authentic Italian pasta.

So how did Monks Deli start?

Monks Deli is a family-run delicatessen spanning five generations. Our first shop opened its doors in Runcorn, just a stone's throw from the banks of the River Mersey in 1884, making us one of the oldest delis in the country!

Out of everything that you serve up at Monks, what do you find is the most popular?

Lunchtime is always very busy. As well as our fantastic selection of pies and pastries we also offer an unparalleled selection of lunchtime offerings from our sandwich and salad bar. All our salad is prepared fresh every day and all our meats and cheeses are cut to order. You won't find a fresher or higher quality lunch in town. We don't believe in the 'pre-packed sandwich'.

At Monks Deli all our sandwiches are made fresh to order while you watch, which means you can have exactly what you want! In terms of individual products Johnson's meat pies are definitely our most popular. People in this town grew up on them and they're still made to the same great recipe.



What do you think has allowed Monks Deli to be a success over so many years?

We may have moved around the town to multiple different shops over the last 140 years, but we're still the same family serving fine food with a side of old-school customer service.

None of the above would have been possible without the good people of Runcorn, who have shopped with us for five generations!

What is it that makes Monks Deli so unique?

We're an award-winning delicatessen specialising in the finest produce. From Cheshire pork sausages to local honey, we love to provide our customers with not only the best of British but the best that Cheshire has to offer. We also pride ourselves on our unrivalled offering of continental classics such as German cured meats, French cheeses, authentic Italian pasta and much more.

"We love to provide our customers with not only the best of British but the best that Cheshire has to offer."

OPEN HOURS

Tues - Weds 7:30 - 14:00	Thurs - Fri 7:30 - 15:00
Saturday 7:30 - 14:00	Sun - Mon Closed

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration:
visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit

**FAMILY
FUELLED**

**HOT
HOT
HOT**

EM'S COOKHOUSE

140 Birchfield Rd, Widnes WA8 9ED

An entrepreneur's dream come true. To serve and fill some bellies with delicious Thai food.

Can you share the journey behind Em's Cookhouse?

Em's Cookhouse has been a dream in the making since 2018, but I was young with a love for travel, which meant putting that dream on hold. However, with the challenges brought by the Covid pandemic and feeling dissatisfied with my job, I decided it was time to take the leap and make my dream a reality.

Together with my partner, while juggling full-time jobs, we dedicated our weeknights and weekends to renovating a caravan, a process that took about a year and a half.

What sets the flavours of your food apart in Halton?

Our food stands out from what is currently available in Halton. At Em's Cookhouse, everything is cooked fresh to order, with all sauces and spring rolls crafted in-house. Our menu introduces flavours that may be unfamiliar to many, particularly Thai cuisine. I have loved introducing dishes that are so foreign to many people and watching them fall in love with Thai food and even become regulars!



TASTY!

**BUT FIRST...
FOOD**

"I love introducing dishes that are so foreign to many people and watching them fall in love with Thai food!"



OPEN HOURS

**Tuesday - Saturday
12:00 - 18:00**

How do you approach sustainability?

We reduce our environmental footprint by exploring composting options for the minimal food/veg waste generated during prep. Most of our takeout packaging and cutlery are recyclable too, aligning with our commitment to environmental consciousness.

Do you ever host or take part in any special events?

We're located in Widnes, but we're available for private events, weddings, festivals. We also operate at local & private events outside of Widnes, such as, Lymm Historic Transport Day, Glazefest and the All-Girls Rugby League festival at Halton Hornets.

Prepare for your next adventure, see our blogs for plenty of inspiration:
visithalton.co.uk/plan-your-visit

SCHOLARS RESTAURANT

Riverside College, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QQ

Head to the exclusive Scholars Training Restaurant at Riverside College for a culinary experience not to be missed. With silver service and gourmet food inspired by dishes from around the world you will not be disappointed – and all without the expensive price tag.

Food is exquisitely prepared and served by talented, Centre of Excellence in Catering & Hospitality students who are trained to first class standards by expert lecturers.

Alumni students include Connor Slater, who at twenty-three years old was promoted to Head Chef at Michelin Star Restaurant Mana in Manchester. Scholars Restaurant not only gives students like Connor the opportunity to experiment and try out new styles to inspire their future career, whilst allowing the public to get a taster of things to come.

IN THE MOOD FOR FOOD

FEEL GOOD FOOD



OPEN HOURS

Tues, Thurs, Fri
12:00 - 13:00



COFFEE, TASTE, INDULGE

BIG DRINKS, SMALL PLATES

OTTERBURNS

Otterburn Street, Sandymoor, Runcorn WA7 1YN

Welcome to Otterburns - your spot for all-day indulgence and refined evenings in Sandymoor, Runcorn.

This versatile, south-facing venue transitions seamlessly from a sunlit coffee house offering breakfast, brunch, and lunch to an upscale wine bar and restaurant, featuring British modern tapas and quality wines and beers by night

This family-run business prides itself on using fresh, locally sourced ingredients and delivering exceptional service. Whether you're enjoying a casual coffee or a sophisticated dinner, every moment at Otterburns is designed to be memorable.

COMING SOON

Private Events

Stay tuned for exciting developments as we expand to cater for private parties, from children's birthdays to wedding receptions, our team is dedicated to making your special occasions unforgettable.

OPEN HOURS

Monday - Thursday	Friday - Sunday
9:00 - 22:00	9:00 - 23:00





SO MUCH MORE TO TASTE

Travel around the borough on a culinary journey, feed your curiosity and find out more about the surprising heritage...

1 Esposito's

Victoria Park
Birchfield Road
Widnes WA8 7SU

81 Highlands Road
Runcorn
WA7 4PT

espositosicecream.co.uk
IG: [espositosdeli](https://www.instagram.com/espositosdeli)

2 Monks Delicatessen

2 Granville St,
Runcorn
WA7 1NE

0192 858 0086
monksdeli.co.uk

3 Hale Village

Hale
Halton
L24 4AX

4 Em's Cookhouse

140 Birchfield Road
Widnes
WA8 9ED

0748 211 8260
IG: [ems.cookhouse](https://www.instagram.com/ems.cookhouse)

5 Scholars Restaurant

Riverside College
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QQ

0151 257 2015
riversidecollege.ac.uk/scholars

6 Otterburns

Otterburn Street
Sandymoor
Runcorn
WA7 1YN

otterburns.co.uk
info@otterburns.co.uk

7 Lewis Carroll Centre

All Saints Church
Daresbury
WA4 4AE

lewiscarrollcentre.org.uk

8 Halton Castle

Castle Road
Runcorn
WA7 2BE



MORE ON TAP



Halton is a rural hinterland boasting a range of fascinating attractions, heritage and beautiful natural landscapes.

The area is perhaps best known for its industrial heritage and iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge, however, there is so much more to Halton than meets the eye. From castles, saints and well known tv spots, there is lots to see and do whilst you sample the food from the many independent and unique eateries in the borough.

BITESIZE RECOMMENDATIONS

Claire Whitlow

Owner of Daresbury Dairy

THE RED LION

The Red Lion in Moore is a firm favourite of mine. The food is all freshly cooked and uses locally sourced ingredients. Plus they also serve Daresbury Dairy ice cream on their dessert menu – not to be biased!

*Red Lion, 19 Runcorn Road
Moore WA4 6UD*

Phil Thornton

Chi Community Cafe

THE NORTON ARMS

I recommend visitors to go to The Norton Arms pub, which does a fantastic Sunday roast and selection of cask beers!

*The Norton Arms, Main Street
Runcorn WA7 2AD*



ANOTHER ROUND!



AN EXTRA SLICE

HALE VILLAGE

Take a trip to the village of Hale, it is like taking a step back in time. This charming village, in the borough of Halton, has rows of thatched cottages, cobbled streets and historic architecture that gives visitors a glimpse into its past. It even has its own legend, the Childe of Hale, John Middleton, was said to be 9ft 3 inches. The tale is that he slept with his feet sticking out of the windows. Go and stand next to the Childe of Hale statue, found in the centre of the village.

Take a walk along the river and visit the lighthouse, perched on a sandstone cliff and overlooks the coastline. After working up an appetite, head to the Childe of Hale for delicious pub grub and welcoming atmosphere.

*Childe of Hale, 6 Church End
Hale L24 4AX*

RING O' BELLS

Daresbury is home to some great walking spots, such as Daresbury Firs. Take a stroll through the foliage and serene atmosphere for a peaceful outing. Keep your eyes peeled for local wildlife.

Located just across from Daresbury Firs, you'll find Ring O' Bells the perfect pit-stop for comforting grub post-walk. Originally Daresbury's courthouse in the early 19th century, this cosy countryside pub offers a traditional menu serving the best of British seasonal dishes.

The laid-back, cosy atmosphere perfectly complements your day in Daresbury. They also welcome well-behaved pups in selected areas, including their lovely outdoor gardens.

*Ring O' Bells, 7 Chester Road
Daresbury WA4 4AJ*





LET'S
PLAY!



SHAKE
IT UP!



VR WAREHOUSE

Level up your day out with VR Warehouse. Immerse yourself in a Virtual Reality. Choose your adventure! Zombies, Music, Horror, Fantasy, escape rooms, you name it, they've got it.

Suitable for adults and families with children aged 8 and above, VR Warehouse promises a unique and exciting experience.

Unit 31 Percival Lane,
Runcorn WA7 4UX

SOCIETY TAP ROOMS

After travelling to an alternate reality, head over to Society Ltd in Runcorn for great times on tap. Their mouth-watering menu serves street food dishes from tasty tacos, juicy burgers, and wings to loaded fries. This trendy tap house and microbrewery also offers Craft and Cask ales, real cider, cocktails, and live music. Sit back and enjoy the lively atmosphere of this vibrant spot.

33 Ashridge Street,
Runcorn WA7 1HU



By completing all of our
Quirky Things to see and do!

To find out more pick up a leaflet,
scan the QR code or go to:

visithalton.co.uk



SCAN ME



@visithalton

*See website for full T&Cs

READ
ALL
ABOUT
IT!

HALTON HAPPENINGS

WOW!

ONLY IN
HALTON

Looking for all the latest happenings in Halton? Look no further! Halton is a vibrant borough brimming with exciting activities and attractions that cater to every taste and interest. From breathtaking natural parks and scenic trails to thrilling activities and interactive museums, Halton offers a wealth of experiences that make it the perfect destination for everyone.

Food lovers will want a slice of Halton's diverse culinary scene, offering everything from cosy cafes and quaint country pubs to trendy artisan bars and those serving dishes from around the world.

Wherever you decide to grab a bite, you'll find something to suit every palate with each bite certain to tantalise your tastebuds.



WELCOME

SO MUCH MORE TO
TASTE



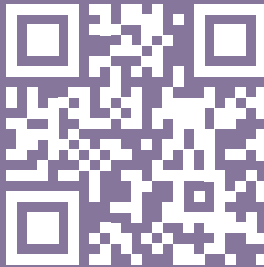
Wherever you decide to grab a bite, you'll find something to suit every palate with each bite certain to tantalise your tastebuds.

With so much to see, do and taste, Halton truly has something for everyone.

Whether you're planning a day trip or a weekend getaway, Halton's unique attractions and diverse offerings are sure to make it a highlight of your adventure and with free parking around the borough, you can savour every moment. So, why wait?

Visit our website to plan your trip and discover the best of Halton today!
www.visithalton.co.uk

**SCAN HERE
FOR MORE TASTES**



VISITHALTON.CO.UK

**SHARE YOUR
HALTON FOODIE STORIES...**
stephanie.davies@halton.gov.uk



**VISIT
HALTON**



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

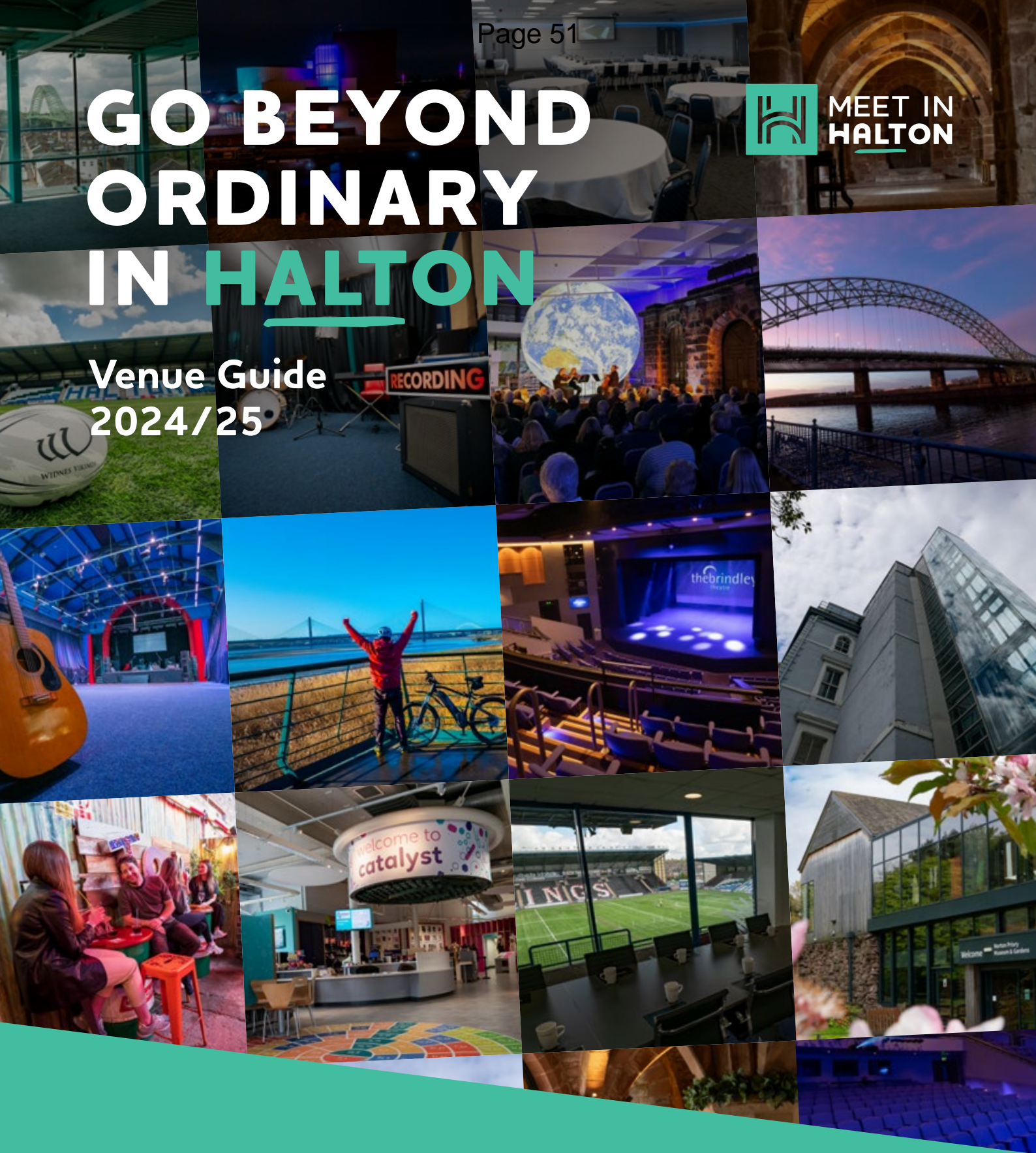
STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND



MEET IN
HALTON

GO BEYOND ORDINARY IN HALTON

Venue Guide
2024/25



THE ALTERNATIVE DESTINATION WHERE...

Meetings, Conferences, Incentives and Exhibitions,
meet Science, Sport, Heritage, Theatre and Music.

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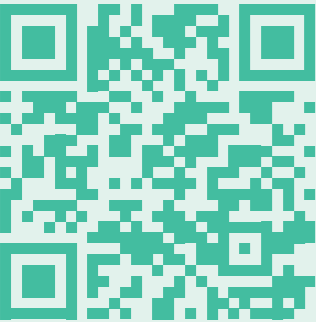
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SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE OF HALTON'S
ALTERNATIVE
OFFERINGS...



WELCOME TO THE
HALTON VENUE GUIDE...

An initiative to promote the award-winning conference and convention facilities throughout the borough. 'The Alternative Destination', as we like to call it, features a whole myriad of venues to make every meeting, incentive, conference, exhibition and event, a highlight of your business calendar.

Halton continues to forge its ambitious plans for technical innovation and key business sector growth. The physical regeneration and transformation of the borough combines rich heritage with contemporary and quirky venues, supported by a strong infrastructure to provide balanced and productive working environments, for now and the future.

Historically Halton has always been at the forefront of trade and connectivity has always been at its heart. Home to an inland port and waterway network that continually transport goods around the country, today Halton remains a prosperous and pioneering industrial giant, as the home of world-class science and innovation, musical and sporting legends along with heritage and cultural excellence.

This Alternative Destination guide offers everything to host any event, from music to arts festivals, new product launches to active away days. So you can plan and book, with confidence.

OUR VENUES

Science, Sport, Heritage, Theatre and Music. Halton's fantastic venues have it all!

CATALYST SCIENCE DISCOVERY CENTRE AND MUSEUM

Meet in the birthplace of chemical industry.

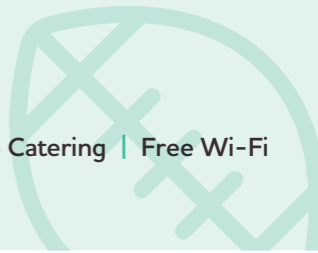
8 spaces | Hosts up to 350 delegates | In-house Catering | Free Wi-Fi
See page 6 for more information.



DCBL STADIUM

Standout and draw in the crowd at DCBL Stadium.

24 spaces | Hosts up to 12500 delegates | Private Breakout Rooms | In-house Catering | Free Wi-Fi
See page 8 for more information.



NORTON PRIORY MUSEUM AND GARDENS

An international site of archaeological significance.

5 spaces | Hosts 200+ delegates | In-house Catering | Free Wi-Fi
See page 10 for more information.



THE BRINDLEY

Take centre stage at this award-winning theatre.

2 large versatile spaces | Hosts up to 400 delegates | Technical Support | In-house Catering | Free Wi-Fi
See page 12 for more information.



THE STUDIO

On the site where The Beatles first performed 'Love Me Do'!

4 spaces | Hosts up to 375 delegates | In-house Catering | Technical Support
See page 14 for more information.



WHY HALTON?

Are you considering Halton as the location for your next meeting or event?
Well here are some reasons why you absolutely should...

Location, Location, Location

Nestled in the rural charm of Cheshire, yet retaining its Liverpool edge and being just a stone's throw from the vibrant buzz of Manchester, Halton offers a blend of industrial heritage, natural attractions and alternative cultural highlights, effortlessly connecting with neighbouring cities, yet feeling unique.

Variety of Venues

Whether you're looking for an intimate space, an epic stadium, a state-of-the-art venue, a film-worthy location, or a heritage-rich setting, Halton has a range of diverse spaces for events of any size, type and budget. Each space offers an array of key equipment and features, flexible catering, accessibility and sustainable initiatives along with an unparalleled 'alternative incentives' to add something extra special.

Easy Access

Boasting a regular and direct rail service from London to Runcorn Station via The West Coast Main Line; inbound and outbound domestic and international flight routes from Liverpool John Lennon Airport; and a strategic location at the heart of the major North West motorway network - whether delegates prefer to travel by train, plane or car, getting to the Borough is easy and convenient for all. Once here an efficient transport network ensures seamless navigation throughout the Borough and beyond.

Great Value Accommodation

Halton offers accommodation options to suit every preference and budget. From modern, comfortable rooms to quaint, cosy inns and larger international hotels, delegates will find the perfect place to rest and recharge.

From sporting arenas to concert hall theatres, Halton offers a plethora of settings to elevate your meetings and events.



Page 53



Image credit: Avanti West Coast



Work Hard, Play Hard

From an all-action round of golf to a cycle along the Trans Pennine Trail, watching a high energy rugby match to taking time to relax with a rejuvenating yoga class or a leisurely canal trip, getting creative with a sound recording studio session or taking a journey into virtual reality, whatever the occasion, Halton has a wide range of attractions to experience.

So, for your next meeting, incentive, conference or event, choose Halton – the 'Alternative Destination' for your business.

CATALYST SCIENCE DISCOVERY CENTRE AND MUSEUM

Mersey Road, Widnes, WA8 0DF

Meet at the birthplace of the chemical industry. Let the interactivity and adaptable spaces be the catalyst to increased productivity and satisfaction for your event!

Housed in a Grade II listed building, Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum is steeped in industrial history with fascinating exhibits and interactive displays. Delegates are able to explore them during breaks, whilst marvelling at the stunning views of the Mersey Gateway Bridge. Whether you want to host a large-scale training event in The Observatory Gallery with 360 views of the Borough or a carry out a small meeting for a team of 10 in The Gossage Room, Catalyst has a range of meeting spaces for a variety of different sized events.



ALTERNATIVE INCENTIVES

- Wellness activities with MIND Halton
- Team Building activities
- Teacher led lab sessions and workshops

BOOKING ENQUIRIES

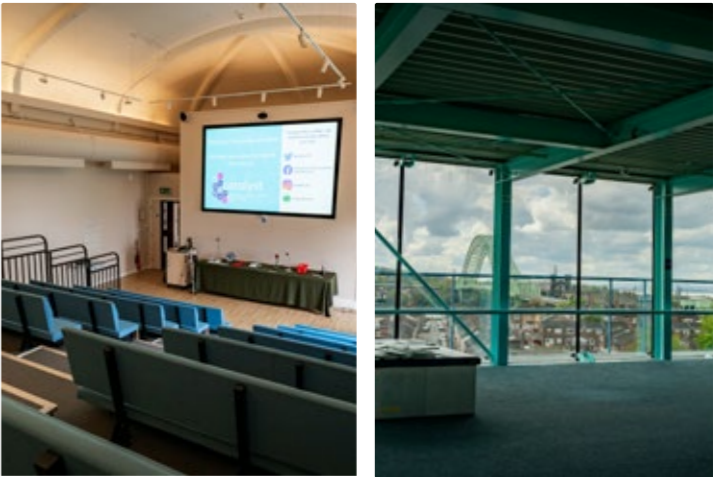
Phone 0151 420 1121
Email info@catalyst.org.uk



Catalyst were a great help in arranging our event.

All attendees really enjoyed the day and were complimentary of the setting.

Cheshire Asbestos Victim Support Group



CAPACITY

350

EVENT TYPES

- Meetings
- Receptions
- Training / Team Building
- Product Launches
- Workshop Functions
- Networking

★ KEY FEATURES

- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Blackout Curtain
- ✓ AV: Video Conferencing
- ✓ Lectern
- ✓ AV: Lighting
- ✓ AV: Sound System
- ✓ Catering
- ✓ AV: Projection
- ✓ On-Site Parking

♿ ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Lifts
- ✓ Accessible Parking
- ✓ Wide Doorways
- ✓ Induction Loops
- ✓ Accessible Toilets
- ✓ Changing Places Facilities
- ✓ Accessible Parking
- ✓ Ramp Access

🌱 SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ Renewable Energy
- ✓ Recycling Initiatives
- ✓ LED Lighting

ROOMS AVAILABLE	SPECS		CAPACITIES							
			MEETING	BOARD ROOM	THEATRE (TIERED)	CLASSROOM	RECEPTION	CABARET	STANDING	EXHIBITION (no. of tables/stalls)
THE DEACON ROOM	22	✓	8							
THE FRIENDS ROOM	25	✓		8			15			
GOSSAGE ROOM	44	✓		16	30					
THE DISCOVERY LAB	74	✓								
THE THEATRE	84	✓		25	70					
EDUCATION CENTRE*	67 (each)	✓			50 or 100	36 or 72				
THE OBSERVATORY GALLERY**	188	✓						40	100	6**
GROUND FLOOR AREA	NA	✓					100		100	

*Across two separate rooms, which can be opened up into one large room.

**This exhibition setup is ideal for local community exhibitions with display space of 2.2m x 2.8m and 2.2m x 1.7m including a large screen TV for associated powerpoints or short films.



DCBL STADIUM

Lower House Lane, Widnes, WA8 7DZ

Stand out and draw in the crowd at this purpose-built community stadium. This world class arena will be more than just a match with your delegates!

Home to the Widnes Vikings, Widnes FC and City of Liverpool FC, the Stadium is one of the most versatile venues in the area. There are 24 flexible meeting and event rooms equipped with the latest presentation and communication technology. Whatever you need to make your event a touchdown, this epic stadium will go the extra yard.

CAPACITY
12500

- EVENT TYPES**
- Conferences
 - Business Meetings
 - Celebration Events

★ **KEY FEATURES**

- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
 - ✓ Lectern
 - ✓ In-house Catering
 - ✓ Free Parking
 - ✓ Alcohol License
- ✓ Natural Daylight
 - ✓ Air Conditioning
 - ✓ Technical Support
 - ✓ AV: Conference Microphone
- ✓ AV: Sound System
 - ✓ AV: Lighting and Projection
 - ✓ AV: Video Conferencing

♿ **ACCESSIBILITY**

- ✓ Lifts
 - ✓ Induction Loops
 - ✓ Accessible Parking
- ✓ Accessible Toilets
 - ✓ Ramp Access
 - ✓ Wide Doorways
- ✓ Changing Places Toilet
 - ✓ Breakout Areas

🌱 **SUSTAINABILITY**

- ✓ Renewable Energy
- ✓ Recycling Initiatives
- ✓ LED Lighting

ALTERNATIVE INCENTIVES

- Entertainment
- Social Events
- Games

BOOKING ENQUIRIES

Phone 0151 510 6000
Email stadium@halton.gov.uk



We had really positive feedback about the venue, staff and food.

All of the venue staff put in hard work and effort to ensure that the event ran smoothly. All of the staff were super helpful, accommodating and efficient.

We highly recommend others to use the stadium for their future events.

University of Liverpool



ROOMS AVAILABLE	SPECS		CAPACITIES						
	SIZE SQM	DAY LIGHT	MEETING	BOARD ROOM	THEATRE	RECEPTION	CABARET	CONFERENCE	EXHIBITION (no. of tables/stalls)
THE BRIDGE SUITE	527	✓		40	400	250	250	60-400	30
KARALIUS SUITE	165	✓	20	35	100	120	120	20-120	15
EXECUTIVE SUITE (21 ROOMS)	Min 12 Max 38	✓		24				2-24	
EXHIBITION FACILITY	674	✓			600	420	420	250-600	50

NORTON PRIORY MUSEUM AND GARDENS

Tudor Road, Runcorn, WA7 1SX

As a site of archaeological significance, Norton Priory's atmospheric Medieval ruins, beautiful Georgian walled garden and modern facilities will add impact to any occasion!

With 900 years of stories to spark creativity, this site has a wealth of history to inspire and invigorate your delegates and their work.

Throughout the rooms available, the stunning views of the Priory's historic grounds provide a tranquil backdrop, which is sure to leave a lasting impression on those in attendance at your event.

During breaks, there are plenty of opportunities for exploration across 42 acres of grounds, which will leave delegates feeling refreshed, rejuvenated, and ready to increase productivity.



BOOKING ENQUIRIES

Phone 0192 856 9895
Email rebeccabeardsworth@nortonpriory.org



ALTERNATIVE INCENTIVES

- Classes/Workshops
- Team Building
- Social Events
- Guided Tours

- Meditation and mindfulness sessions
- Bee Sessions with Priory Ranger

We found that Norton Priory provided the perfect combination of a formal working space in a unique and relaxed venue.

Halton Borough Council

★ KEY FEATURES

- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Lectern
- ✓ Catering
- ✓ Free On-Site Parking

- ✓ Dedicated Event Manager/Artistic Directors
- ✓ AV: Lighting*
- ✓ AV: Projection

- ✓ AV: Sound System*
- ✓ AV: Video Conferencing*

♿ ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Lifts
- ✓ Induction Loops
- ✓ Accessible Parking

- ✓ Accessible Toilets
- ✓ Ramp Access
- ✓ Wide Doorways

- ✓ Accessible Outdoor Space
- ✓ Breakout Rooms

🌱 SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ Renewable Energy

- ✓ Recycling Initiatives

- ✓ LED Lighting

* Available at an additional charge.

CAPACITY

200+

EVENT TYPES

- Conferences
- Dinners
- Meetings
- Receptions
- Product Launches
- Celebrations/Weddings
- Photo/Film Shoots



ROOMS AVAILABLE	SPECS		CAPACITIES						
			MEETING	BOARD ROOM	THEATRE	RECEPTION	CABARET	CONFERENCE	EXHIBITION (no. of tables/stalls)
THE MEDIEVAL UNDERCROFT	116	✓	50		80		40/50	80	10*
THE ATRIUM	197	✓	100	50	140	100	60	120	10*
THE FOYLE ROOM	80	✓	50	30	60	50	40	60	
THE UPPER GALLERY	240	✓	50	30	60		50	50	14*
THE DISCOVERY ROOM	65	✓	50	30	60	50	40	60	

*Please get in touch to discuss larger scale exhibitions.

THE BRINDLEY

High Street, Runcorn, WA7 1BG

Add some stage presence to your event at The Brindley, a multi-purpose, state-of-the-art theatre that performs each and every time!

After opening in 2004 this venue has become centre stage for arts and entertainment in Halton.

This award-winning venue has hosted notable names such as Gary Barlow and Peter Kay. With its unique, modern and accessible design, The Brindley is a location that will leave your next event with a standing ovation. The main Auditorium and Studio spaces are available to hire for performances, conferences and meeting. The Brindley also features a lovely Terrace Café overlooking the adjacent Bridgewater Canal.



BOOKING ENQUIRIES

Phone **0151 907 8360**
Email **thebrindley@halton.gov.uk**



Visual mockup of The Brindley Theatre Enhancement (Development starting in 2024)



ALTERNATIVE INCENTIVES

- Café
- Entertainment
- Events

CAPACITY
400

EVENT TYPES

- Conferences
- Meetings
- Events

★ KEY FEATURES

- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Event Support
- ✓ AV: Sound System
- ✓ Lectern
- ✓ AV: Lighting
- ✓ AV: Projection
- ✓ Technical Support
- ✓ Catering
- ✓ AV: Projection
- ✓ Blackout Curtains
- ✓ Disabled Access
- ✓ Alcohol License

♿ ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Lifts
- ✓ Accessible Parking
- ✓ Ramp Access
- ✓ Induction Loops
- ✓ Accessible Toilets
- ✓ Wide Doorways

🌱 SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ Recycling Initiatives
- ✓ LED Lighting

Brindley Theatre Enhancement

As part of the Runcorn Town Investment Plan, the Brindley will undergo a major development, starting in 2024. An extension to the building will incorporate the library service to build into the wider ambition of creating a cultural hub for the community. There will also be a well-designed large café restaurant that will complement the library relocation into the building.

ROOMS AVAILABLE	CAPACITIES		CAPACITIES							
	SPECS		MEETING	BOARD ROOM	THEATRE	RECEPTION	CABARET	CONFERENCE	STANDING	EXHIBITION (no. of tables/stalls)
	SIZE SQM	DAY LIGHT								
AUDITORIUM	NA				400					
STUDIO	190		on request	on request	119	on request	80	119	150	14



THE STUDIO

Lacey Street, Widnes, WA8 7SQ

Creating music is a large part of Widnes' heritage, it's what people do around here. Your guests will love you for hosting your event a stone's throw away from where The Beatles first performed 'Love Me Do'.

This hybrid community venue is run by LOOSE, a charity who aim to remove barriers to arts and culture in Halton. This space includes a modular stage that can be used to build further raised platforms and a gallery space to display artwork. The Studio invites you and your delegates to find your voice and get creative, with all the high-tech equipment you could need.

CAPACITY

375

EVENT TYPES

- Conferences
- Meetings
- Receptions
- Training Parties
- Workshops
- Exhibits

★ KEY FEATURES

- ✓ Free Wi-Fi
- ✓ Lectern
- ✓ Catering*
- ✓ Alcohol License
- ✓ Blackout Curtains
- ✓ Dedicated Event Manager
- ✓ AV: Lighting
- ✓ AV: Projection
- ✓ Disabled Access
- ✓ AV: Sound System
- ✓ Kitchen & Bar
- ✓ Technical Support

& ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Accessible Toilets
- ✓ Ramp Access
- ✓ Wide Doorways
- ✓ Breakout Areas

🌱 SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ Recycling Initiatives
- ✓ Composting Initiatives
- ✓ LED Lighting
- ✓ No Bottled Water
- ✓ Rainwater Harvesting

*Provided by a third party.






BOOKING ENQUIRIES

Phone 0151 420 8997
Email info@thestudiowidnes.org.uk



ALTERNATIVE INCENTIVES

- Classes
- Workshops
- Activities
- Social Events
- Games
- Entertainment

ROOMS AVAILABLE	SPECS		CAPACITIES							
			MEETING	BOARD ROOM	THEATRE	RECEPTION	CABARET	CONFERENCE	STANDING	EXHIBITION (no. of tables/stalls)
	SIZE SQM	DAY LIGHT								
THE MAIN SPACE	207	✓					150	200	375	20
THE GALLERY	38	✓							30	6
REHEARSAL ROOMS	8	✓								
LIVE ROOM	16	✓								



TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION

Travelling to and from Halton by road, rail or air is easy. The Borough is well connected, making all of our venues accessible whichever way you travel.

By Road

Halton is situated at the heart of the major North West motorway network, with quick and easy access throughout the region and the wider UK via the M62, M56 and M6.

For convenience, there are several electric car charging points and free parking available throughout the Borough. Runcorn and Widnes are connected by Merseyflow's Mersey Gateway Bridge; the toll system means there are no pay booths, which helps reduce journey times and minimise congestion. Payment can be made prior to your journey or up to 12 hours after your crossing at merseyflow.co.uk.

By Air

We have two international airports nearby. Liverpool John Lennon Airport is under 15 minutes away providing flights from major European business centres. Manchester Airport is approx 30 minutes away and has direct flights from over 200 national and international destinations.

By Rail

London is just two hours away by train with services every hour into Runcorn. The station itself lies on the Liverpool branch of the West Coast Main Line with hourly services from Liverpool Lime Street and direct rail services from Birmingham and Chester. If you're travelling from Manchester or Warrington there are direct trains to Widnes station.

Overnight delegates can recharge at one of the borough's great value hotels, all within easy reach of the venues and networking spaces. Providing them with everything they need to work, live, and relax while away from home...



TRAVELODGE

Fiddlers Ferry Road, Widnes, WA8 0HA

- 52 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Wi-Fi
- EV Charging
- Pet Friendly
- Breakfast Available

travelodge.co.uk/hotels/191/Widnes-hotel • 0871 984 6183



THE HILLCREST HOTEL

Cronton Lane, Widnes, WA8 9AR

- 50 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Restaurant / Bar
- Room Service
- Free Wi-Fi
- 24 Hour Front Desk
- Breakfast Available
- Taxi Service Available

hillcrest-hotel.co.uk/hotel • info@hillcrest-hotel.co.uk



EVERGLADES PARK HOTEL

Derby Road, Widnes, WA8 3UJ

- 65 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Free Wi-Fi
- Restaurant / Bar
- Gym
- Pool, Sauna, Jacuzzi
- Breakfast Available
- Dog Friendly

everglades.lavenderhotels.co.uk • reservations@lavenderhotels.co.uk



HOLIDAY INN

Wood Lane, Runcorn, WA7 3HA

- 153 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Restaurant / Bar
- 24 Hour Front Desk
- Free Wi-Fi
- Gym with classes
- Breakfast available
- Pool, Spa, Sauna

hiruncornhotel.co.uk • 0333 320 9350



PREMIER INN

Chester Road, Preston Brook, Runcorn, WA7 3BA

- 88 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Free Wi-Fi
- Restaurant / Bar
- EV Charging
- 24 Hour Front Desk
- Breakfast Available

premierinn.com/gb/en/home • 0333 321 8459



PREMIER INN

Venture Fields, Ashley Way, Widnes, WA8 0GY

- 87 Rooms
- Free Parking
- Wi-Fi
- Restaurant
- 24 Hour Front Desk
- Breakfast Available

premierinn.com/gb/en/home • 0333 321 9239

HALTON HIGHLIGHTS

Showing the best of what the borough has to offer...

Halton is an area best known for its industrial heritage and iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge. But did you know, there is much more to Halton than meets the eye?

Comprising of the two major towns of Runcorn and Widnes, along with the idyllic villages of Hale, Daresbury and Moore. There's always something happening in Halton, from live music and theatre performances, to food festivals and outdoor adventures.

A rural hinterland boasting a range of fascinating attractions, renowned heritage and countryside that draws visitors from across the UK.



The Mersey Estuary



Widnes Vikings playing at DCBL Stadium

HALTON HIGHLIGHTS

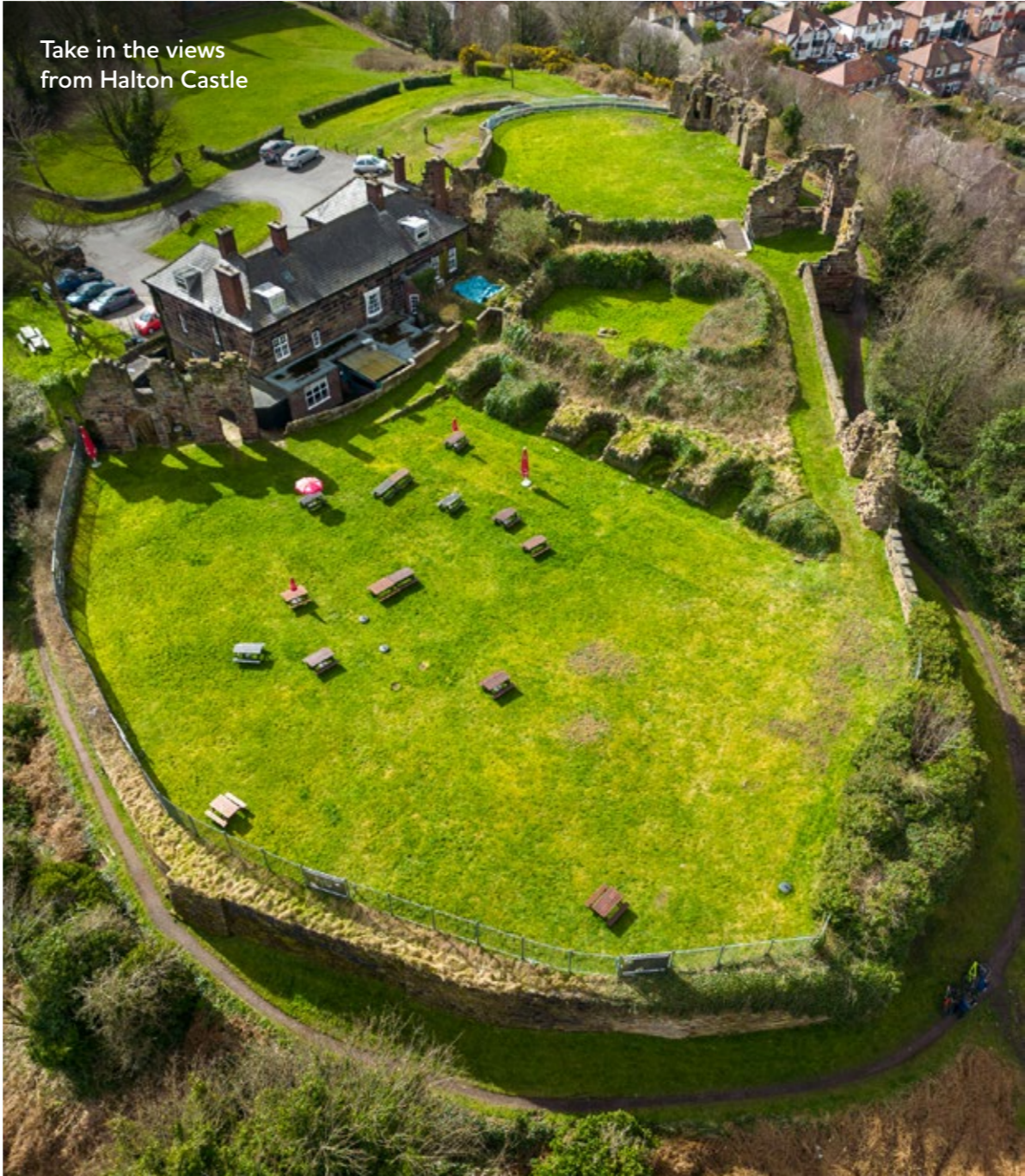
With nature in abundance, it's easy to escape and wander around the Borough, on foot or bike with hundreds of trails to choose from, many along the River Mersey, and through the parks and woodlands.

From the award-winning cultural hub, The Brindley, to the historic Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, all of our venues are attractions in their own right.

Catering to the history buffs, nature enthusiasts, or those simply looking for a getaway filled with surprises, this hidden gem in the heart of the North West is well worth exploring, making it even more appealing as a location for your next meeting or conference.



Discover the Lewis Carroll Centre in Daresbury



Take in the views from Halton Castle



Norton Priory Museum and Gardens



Hale Lighthouse

Visit our website to access the latest information on venues, accommodation and attractions. Also, be sure to check out our blogs for insightful guides and itinerary inspiration. Whether you're planning a corporate gathering, team retreat, or conference, Halton has everything you need to make your event unforgettable.

So, why wait? Visit [visithalton.co.uk](https://www.visithalton.co.uk) for more inspiration and discover more **#HaltonHighlights** today!

MAP KEY

1. **CATALYST**
Mersey Road,
Widnes, WA8 0DF
2. **DCBL STADIUM**
Lower House Lane,
WA8 7DZ
3. **NORTON PRIORY**
Tudor Rd, Windmill
Hill, WA7 1SX
4. **THE BRINDLEY**
High Street,
Runcorn, WA7 1BG
5. **THE STUDIO**
Lacey Street,
Widnes, WA8 7SQ



**MAKE IT MORE ALTERNATIVE
MEETING SPACES WITH CHARACTER**

[VISITHALTON.CO.UK/VENUES](https://visithalton.co.uk/venues)



This guide is part of a pilot project. If you would like your venue or business to be included in a potential future iteration, please contact: visithalton@halton.gov.uk



VISIT
HALTON

HALTON
HIGHLIGHTS

Issue 3



TANTALISING
TRAILS

THE ORIGINAL
INFLUENCERS

A LOVE LETTER
TO HALTON



WELCOME

I am delighted to introduce Issue 3 of Halton Highlights; this edition features glimpses into Halton's rich history and heritage and helps to preserve the area's cultural legacy.

Officially formed on 1st April 1974, the Borough of Halton was named after the ancient Barony of Halton which had owned land on both sides of the River Mersey, uniting the two towns Widnes and Runcorn, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool.

And whilst the Borough itself is relatively young, its towns, villages and open spaces have a rich and surprising heritage dating back to the Bronze Age. The Romans also had a presence in Halton, with a fort established on Castle Rock by Aethelflaed in 915 AD. The fort was strategically located on a hill overlooking the River Mersey. Fast forwarding to the 19th Century and Widnes was regarded as the birthplace of the chemical industry and its development spread to Runcorn where the towns were renowned for soapmaking and inland ports transporting goods across the country.

Our landscapes of waterways, pathways and built environments that have played a pivotal role in our industrial past provide

surprising, unforgettable and Instagrammable moments across several important heritage sites, including Halton Castle, the Runcorn Railway Bridge, and Norton Priory Museum and Gardens. Halton is a place where you can take a selfie with the Childe of Hale giant, a legendary figure in English folklore, embark on a journey of scientific exploration at the Catalyst, immerse yourself in the world of literary greats such as Alice in Wonderland at the Lewis Carroll Centre and not forgetting musical masterpieces including one of the most legendary concerts ever held in the UK, the iconic Stone Roses gig at Spike Island.

Whether you're a resident or visitor, simply follow one or more of our trails to soak up the engrossing stories of our past that make the culture of our today.

Rob Sanderson-Thomas

*Chief Executive Officer
Norton Priory Museum and Gardens
Chair of Marketing Halton
and Halton Heritage Partnership*

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Images kindly supplied Runcorn & District Historical Society, Ken Pye & The Discover Liverpool Library and Melanie Dodd. To the best of our knowledge all historical information is correct at the time of publishing.



BRIDGES, BOBBIES, BOATS AND A BUSTLING TOWN

RUNCORN OLD TOWN

Located on the banks of the Mersey you can witness the views and structures of Halton's iconic bridges with the contrast of ancient and modern. Head into the old town and meander along the streets lined with interesting architecture, taking in the sights and sounds.

Navigate along the Bridgewater Canal Towpath, onto historic pathways down along the Promenade and through the heart of Runcorn. You'll be riveted by the cargo of stories this old inland port Town has. You can't come to Runcorn without a visit to the Borough's cutting edge

cultural hotspot, The Brindley Theatre; it's the town's star of the show, located on the site of a former soap works. Once you wipe away what's on the surface, you'll find there's so much more to explore.



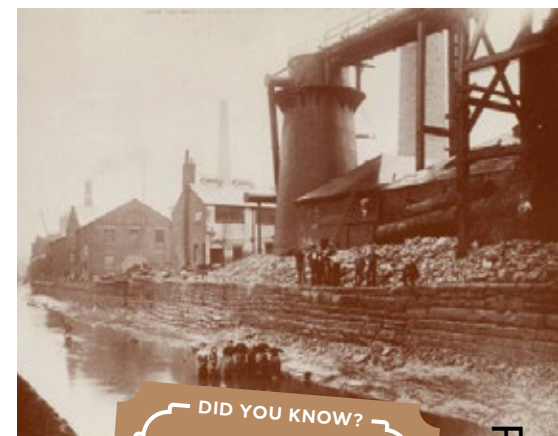
FLOWING WITH
HISTORY

THE BRINDLEY

This key cultural asset is currently undergoing redevelopment which will transform the already award-winning theatre with a refreshed design, making it more visible and accessible, taking advantage of a new outdoor public realm and vistas connecting to the town.

Previously the Brindley's sought after location on the Bridgewater Canal has been the site of some of the town's pioneering industries including Soaperies and Tanneries.

You can get a real sense of the area and the landmarks, with great views of the Mersey and town from the existing theatre terrace or from the top of the pedestrian footbridge over the canal. Once you're ready to discover more take the Bridgewater Canal tow path, to continue your journey and delve deeper into the Old Town's heritage.



DID YOU KNOW?

Runcorn was originally spelt "Rumcofan", literally meaning "a wide cove or bay".

Page 64

1816

The Brindley Theatre stands on the site which once was Hazlehurst's soapery, which was opened in 1816 by Thomas Hazlehurst.

1837

A massive 102 million lbs of soap was made in the country, 33 million lbs coming from London. The next largest amount was 9 million lbs, from only two Runcorn soaperies, Hazlehurst's and their rivals the Johnson Brothers.

1910

The Brindley Theatre stands on the site which once was Hazlehurst's.

1914

The soapery closed this year, and was quickly converted into a tannery, to help with the production of leather, needed for WW1.

1958

One of the main tanneries, Camden, closed during this year. Based on Runcorn High Street, located where St. Paul's Gardens are now.



DELPH BRIDGE

Built following the completion of the famous and first truly man-made Bridgewater Canal in 1776, this 65km waterway connected Runcorn to Manchester and Leigh.

Head for the towpath along the canal and you can imagine the scenes of busy steam packets transporting passengers and goods bound for Manchester departing from Runcorn Top Locks. Close by on Canal Street stands the Navigation Inn which would have previously served as accommodation for travellers and canal

workers with its then three rooms and eight stalls for horses. The aptly named Bridge Street close to the towpath takes you on a gentle footpath down to the town. Historic buildings line the street, including the Egerton Arms which also had three bedrooms with room for ten horses and the imposing red brick Old Market Hall, erected in 1856.

DID YOU KNOW?
Delph is derived from "delf", meaning "quarry"



THE OLD POLICE STATION

Located on land given by the Bridgewater Trustees, for a nominal annual rent of five shillings, it was built by William Rigby for £450, mainly from local sandstone, and completed in 1831.

Within the building there was a large court room for petty sessions and public business, and living accommodation for the constable. In 1884, the town's administration moved to Waterloo House, Waterloo Road, which then became the Town Hall. Cheshire Constabulary then took over the whole of the building, becoming the town's very own Police Station.

DID YOU KNOW?
This historic building still contains markings of its history as a police station, and picture of what it looked like in 1800.

HISTORY
AROUND
EVERY CORNER

RUNCORN SHIP YARDS AND PROMENADE

At the promenade you'll be rewarded with the fantastic views of the historic Manchester Ship Canal, Mersey Estuary and the town of Widnes which lies on the opposite side of the Estuary.

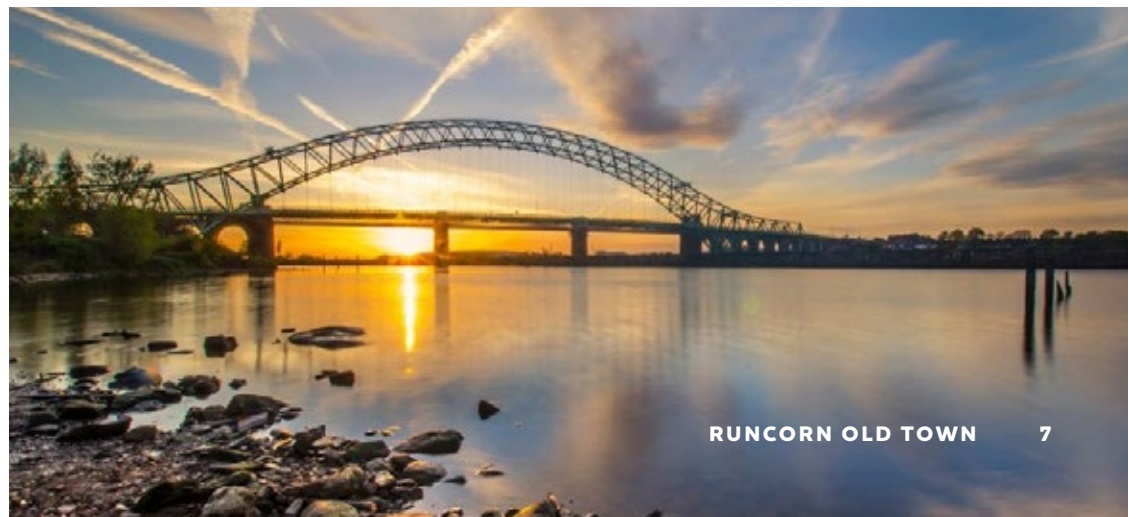
Promenade plaques marking the history of Runcorn Ferry are visible. Take a seat on the benches and you can also see the two iconic Bridges (Mersey Gateway Bridge and Silver Jubilee Bridge) and the remains of the four shipyards of Mersey Street, Mill Street, Belvedere and Castle Rock, which made Runcorn famous for ship building.

Mersey Street yard was opened around 1800. When Dennis Brundrit took over around 1820, shipbuilding in the yard began in earnest. He and his sons expanded the business to become a major employer, producing vessels of the highest quality. The yard closed between 1888 and 1890, with the coming of the Manchester Ship Canal, which sadly killed off shipbuilding in Runcorn.

Mill Street Yard started as a timber yard and smithy around the early 1820s, and by 1836 ships were being built there. Around the 1870s, Philip Speakman sold the yard, and the Brundrit's absorbed it into their Mersey Street yard.

Belvedere Yard was opened between 1838 and 1840, by Samuel Mason, though like most of the yards, they changed owners quite often. One of the last vessels built at the yard, was the 'Traffic', a steam tender built by Philip Speakman in 1872.

Castle Rock Yard existed from around 1810. Like the other yards, It ceased shipbuilding due to the introduction of the Manchester Ship Canal. However, Richard Abel took over the yard, and Mersey Flats (barges) were still being built. Repairs to vessels were also undertaken until 1953, when the last Flat, the 'Ruth Bate' was launched, and the building of the Silver Jubilee bridge forced the closure of the yard.





ALL SAINTS CHURCH

One of Halton's "Hidden Gems" is the beautiful and distinctive All Saints Church, which overlooks the Mersey waterfront.

As you walk along the perimeter wall of the church, you'll see the old tomb stones in the grounds of the churchyard which were laid flat to form paths in 1963, after each stone had been photographed and recorded. The oldest stone dates to 1626, with the date still legible.

There has been a place of worship, on or near this spot, since 915, when Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians and eldest daughter of King Alfred the Great, built her fortification on the bank of the river at its narrowest point to prevent attacks from the invading Viking forces. There was also an Augustinian Priory around the area, built in 1115, by William FitzNigel, 2nd Baron of Halton.

It was later moved to Norton in 1134, by William FitzWilliam, 3rd Baron. About 1240 an ancient parish church was built, it was originally the church of St Bertelin, at an unknown date it became St Bartholomew's and then in the 19th century the new church became All Saints. The church was demolished in 1846, due to it being unstable and dangerous. A new church was built on the same spot and opened in January 1849.

DID YOU KNOW?

The church clock was made by Runcorn clockmaker Jonathon Handley, who also made the clock on the original Town Hall.



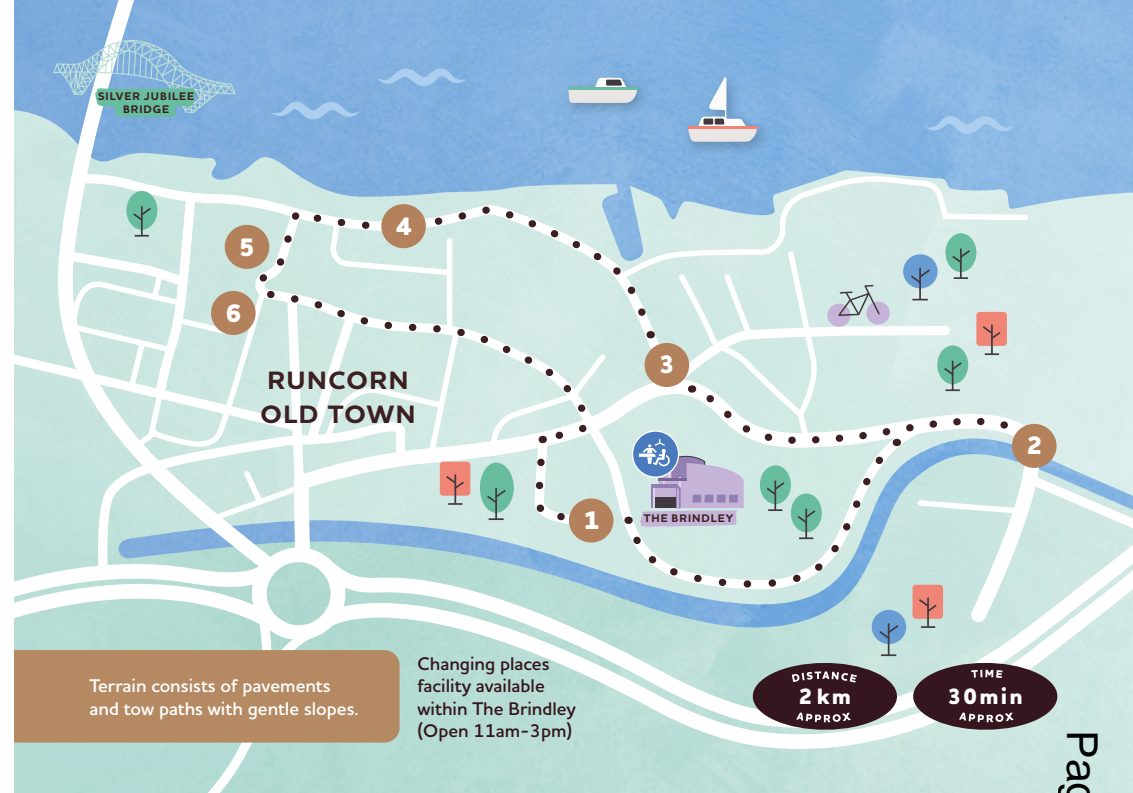
FRAILER'S GUITAR SHOP

Frailer's hits a chord with musicians the world over. This prestigious and high-quality guitar shop has left an indelible mark on music and culture, while being a staple of Runcorn's heritage and making a contribution to the wider area and nation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many famous musicians have stopped by to shop at Frailer's. Rory Gallagher, Arctic Monkeys, Noddy Holder, Pete Doherty and many more!

A must-visit for any music fan. Once you step inside you'll be hit by the beautiful guitars that swoop down from the ceiling tempting prospective customers to try them out and strum along as you chat to the shop owner Frank, listening to his stories will be music to your ears.



Terrain consists of pavements and tow paths with gentle slopes.

Changing places facility available within The Brindley (Open 11am-3pm)

DISTANCE
2 km
APPROX

TIME
30 min
APPROX

Start point: Car Park at The Brindley, High Street, Runcorn, WA7 1BG

1 THE BRINDLEY

- Runcorn's cultural hub is the perfect start for the Old Town walk. Take the Bridgewater Canal tow path eastbound as it curves round to the next point of Delph Bridge.

2 DELPH BRIDGE

- Follow the towpath along the canal, then join Bridge Street as it takes you on a gentle footpath down towards the town.

3 THE OLD POLICE STATION

- As you continue along Bridge Street you'll come to the Old Police Station, built by William Rigby for £450, mainly from local sandstone it was completed in 1831.

4 RUNCORN SHIP YARDS & PROMENADE

- Turning right onto Mersey Road you'll hit the promenade and be rewarded with the fantastic views of Mersey Estuary and the remnants of the Shipyards.

5 ALL SAINTS CHURCH

- Opposite the promenade as you head up Waterloo Road turning left at Church Street, is one of Halton's "Hidden Gems", the beautiful All Saints Church, overlooking the waterfront.

6 FRAILER'S GUITAR SHOP

- Continue along Church Street to the famous Frailer's Guitar Shop, a family-ran business for over 50 years. Head back through the bustling town to The Brindley to finish.



THATCHED HAMLET, FAMOUS GIANT AND 45FT LIGHTHOUSE

HALE

Hale's countrified charm punches way above its weight compared to the popular hamlets of the Cotswolds and Yorkshire Dales.

It has it all, even a lighthouse at Hale Point. You can stroll from the village along edges of farmland and skirting fields of barley to the shores of the Mersey to Hale Head. Beyond the estuary stand the rolling hills of Cheshire's Frodsham and Helsby. As you walk the route there's so much stock to fill your social media feeds, including

the picture postcard views of the Lighthouse, the Village Cottages, and the impressive statue.

HALE HALL

Tucked away in the woodland of Hale Park you'll discover the heritage spot and former site of Hale Hall, which was originally an extremely elaborate building, featuring a home farm, kitchen gardens, glasshouses and an icehouse.

Some parts of Hale Park became farmland and modification through the years. Unfortunately a great fire destroyed the remaining south front of the Hall. The Hall fell into ruin and was eventually demolished. Today, you can still explore the site of the Hall as its stonework is still

visible while walking among the woodlands. From the Hall head out of the park down Church End and you'll discover all the fascinating history Hale has to offer.

DID YOU KNOW?

The detached, Grade II listed, thatched cottage opposite the Statue, dates back to the 15th century and was the birthplace and home of John Middleton. Because of his size, it's said that he slept with his feet out of the window.

CHILDE OF HALE

Stroll past the picturesque, thatched cottages and on the opposite side of the road you won't miss the larger-than-life bronze statue of the giant, John Middleton, 'Childe Of Hale'.

Dwarfing the tiny cottages, born in 1578 Middleton was an agricultural worker famed for his incredible height and strength whose stature was legendary. Standing at a height of 9ft 3in (2.82m) tall before his 20th birthday, when King James I learnt about the Childe of Hale's great

height, he invited him to his court, where John Middleton challenged the King's wrestler in the King's court and won!

DID YOU KNOW?

The name Hale is thought to derive from an Anglo-Saxon word (halh) meaning a corner or angle of land





MANOR HOUSE

The village's imposing Grade II listed Manor House, was built originally as the parsonage just across the road from St Mary's Church. Subsequently it served as the residence of successive squires, the last being the late Mr Peter Fleetwood Hesketh.

The Rev. William Langford added the impressive west face to the house in the 18th century. His coat of arms and monogram sit carved in stone over the entrance. This elegant Queen Anne building has an intricate facade complete with blank windows. One curious feature, though, is the facade's lack of depth, although successive residents have attempted to compensate for it by adding on at the rear of the house.

ST MARY'S CHURCH

The first church to be built in Hale was built by Johannes de Hibernia (John of Ireland) in 1081. There has been an unbroken history of a place of worship ever since.

The church is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade II listed building, the oldest part of the existing building is the sandstone tower which dates back to the 14th century. Its square churchyard contains the graves of two of Hale's most notable residents: the Childe of Hale and John Ireland (dating from 1462).



HALE LIGHTHOUSE

Leaving the village, continue your journey down Church Road and you'll be hit by the resplendent whitewashed Lighthouse standing 45ft tall and the open views of the River Mersey.

The original lighthouse was a short square tower, erected in 1838. Its purpose was to stand as a beacon of safety lighting the way for vessels plying the river to avoid accident.

The current lighthouse that you can see today was built in 1901 replacing the original. It was a target for Luftwaffe bombers during the Second World War. Hale Head was the southernmost point of the traditional county of Lancashire in the days when the Mersey formed the border with Cheshire.

You'll see the sweeping red rocks that meet the mudflats and sparkling waters of the Mersey Estuary, with views of Frodsham and Helsby on the horizon.





DUCK DECOY

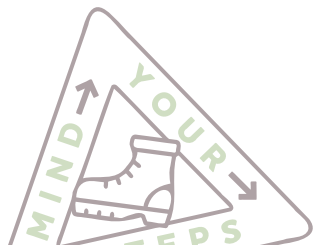
The area surrounding the duck decoy is a protected nature reserve, covering over 3,000 hectares. This part of the manor of Hale was drained in the medieval period, with the idea of increasing the amount of land suitable to plough.

The trade-off was a reduction in land that wetland wildfowl could use. To counter this, the duck decoy was built. Designed to look like the many other coverts that dotted the landscape, the lack of shelter for water birds would make it an attractive spot. A pond was dug in the centre to complete the picture.

The distinctive star shape of the Decoy comes from the five pipes which allowed the game keeper to approach the pond from whichever direction he needed to keep downwind of the fowl. The pipes were lined with wicker arches, joined together by nets. With the help of his dog, and strategically placed screens, the keeper would scare the birds down the pipes, the netting decreasing in width. At the pipes' tip, the netting would be small enough to make catching the birds easy. A restored gamekeeper's hut is also on-site.

The area itself is officially a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, built in the 17th century. The exact construction date of the Hale Duck Decoy is not known, with early records only proving that it was prior to 1754 - when it underwent improvement and repair.

Access is restricted. Friends of pickering pasture occasionally organise public visits.



Start point: Hale Park Car Park L24 4EA (entrance opposite Hale Post Office)

1 HALE HALL

- Start at the Hall and continue out of the Hale Park car park, turning right down Church End.
- You'll see the rows of picturesque, thatched cottages come into view.

2 CHILDE OF HALE

- Located on Parsonage Green opposite the cottages is the statue of Hale's most celebrated and tallest resident, John Middleton.

3 MANOR HOUSE

- Just behind the Statue you'll see the impressive Manor House. Passing by it you'll see the curious feature of the facade's lack of depth.

4 ST MARY'S CHURCH

- On Church Road stay on the same side of the Manor House and only a couple of minutes away you'll arrive at the Church.

5 HALE LIGHTHOUSE

- Continue your walk and half a mile along Church Road you'll come to Lighthouse

6 DUCK DECOY

- If you're able and the tide is out walk along the coast or take the Small Ends path around the lighthouse. Carry on through the open fields to Ram's Brook and follow the brook northwards. You'll see the trees that form the wooded perimeter of the Decoy then head back along Town Lane to the Village centre.



TREE LINED WALKWAYS, A TOWER AND MINATURE TRAIN

RUNCORN TOWN PARK

The largest park in the Borough sits at the heart of the New Town and is an expansive oasis for locals, visitors and wildlife, recently it has been made even more accessible, with picnic spots, plenty of attractions, plus heaps of historic and modern landmarks.

Make your way up through the park to the iconic and imposing Water Tower, lose yourself in the meadows and woodland which are alive with birds. Listen to the woodpeckers and look out for even more wildlife in the ponds along

the way. If want to let off steam, swing and slide head for one of the multiple play areas or take a journey on the enchanting Miniature Railway.



HALTON MINIATURE RAILWAY

Opened in 1979, the railway is run entirely by volunteers. (Members of the Halton Miniature Railway Society Limited.)

The 10-minute journey takes you through parts of Town Park and woodland. The rail track is 7 1/4" gauge and almost a mile in length. There's no charge to ride the train but donations are always welcome. Look out for Mousetrap Hall Station where you can board the train, take a look at the rolling stock ranging from petrol hydraulic locomotives and battery electric trains.

Trains run 1pm until 4pm on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, March until October.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can ski in the park at Runcorn Ski Centre - Open daily 11am - 7pm





RUNCORN TOWN PARK

Due to the Park's status as a central part of the Runcorn New Town development, there is a continued link between the creation of the park and the formation of Halton as a whole, with the Borough celebrating its 50th year in 2024.

The creation of Town Park preserved nearly 157 hectares of existing woodlands and undulating grassland. As you explore the park you'll come across a 'Mini Wembley' an area dedicated for recreational and cultural activities, climbing rocks, sculptured seating and street furniture, picnic and play areas, along with accessible pathways that flow around the edge of the park and through the ancient woodland.



NORTON WATER TOWER

Best viewed from within Town Park, Norton Water Tower cuts a distinctive and imperious figure as it rises above the trees. The Water Tower is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade II listed building. The red sandstone building is an imposing 99 feet high and has a diameter of 82 feet, built in the shape of a cylinder.

The huge sandstone tower is visible as you cross the Mersey from Widnes and for a closer look you can stand in awe gazing upwards along the long grass vista from the park. It was built between 1888 and 1892 on the water pipeline between Lake Vyrnwy in North Wales and Liverpool to act as a balancing reservoir in the process of supplying water to Runcorn and Liverpool. Water is carried to Liverpool through a tunnel 10 feet (3 m) wide under the River Mersey. It's also the largest UK tromboned pressure relief device currently in operation, designed by George F. Deacon, the Chief Engineer of the Liverpool Corporation Waterworks Department.

ST BERTELINE'S WOOD

The wood was added as an extension to Windmill Hill Wood in 1997 when the Commission for the New Towns gifted the land to the Woodland Trust. Windmill Hill was once part of the estate attached to the Augustinian monastery of Norton Priory.

It's an oasis of mixed woodland and a haven for a varied range of wildlife, with extensive network of gravel surfaced and grass footpaths, most of which are suitable for buggies and wheelchairs, although they can become muddy in winter. The woodland is alive with birds, including owls and woodpeckers and hosts a wide range of tree and plant species, while the ponds are home to frogs, toads and newts.

— PIT STOP —

If you want to press on further, lying to the north of the Park is Phoenix Park and **The CHI Community Café** which offers home-made food, snacks and Cheshire Farm ice creams, it also has a fully accessible Changing Places Toilet



STEP INTO HERITAGE



Page 71



Changing places facility available within CHI Community Café in Phoenix Park (opening times: Mon-Fri 9-4pm, Sat-Sun 9-3. Closed Wednesday).

Terrain consists of pavements, woodlands and paths with gentle slopes.

Start point: Town Park Car Park, Stockham Ln, Palace Fields Ave, WA7 6PT

1 HALTON MINIATURE RAILWAY

- Pick up steam and start your walk from the Miniature Railway heading past the Town Park Playground into the Park.

2 RUNCORN TOWN PARK

- You'll find yourself on the park pathways, passing the climbing rocks, picnic ground, then recreational area on your left. Continue north and you'll soon see a path open up on your right.

3 NORTON WATER TOWER

- Walk up the tree lined path and you'll see imposing Norton Water Tower rising above the trees at the end of another grassy pathway. This is the closest view you'll have of the Tower

- as you double back to continue your walk.

4 ST BERTELINE'S WOOD

- Carry on northwards along the park path and then you'll hit Norton Lane where you'll turn left to explore the wooded oasis of St Berteline's Wood. From the wood travel south back through the park and pick up Stockham Lane, following the lane you'll be back at the car park and your finish point.



One of the focal pieces of Halton's Heritage Open Days is "A Love Letter to Halton" commissioned by Halton Heritage Partnership - a uniquely curated performance piece illustrating the connections between people that have shaped Halton over the past 50 years. We caught up with Rob Sanderson Thomas, Chair of Halton Heritage Partnership, to find out more...

What was the inspiration behind the project?

We wanted to celebrate Halton's 50th anniversary by bringing to life some of the incredible stories from the community. After some creative/artistic research on what may work well for this project, we took inspiration from one of the most successful shows in the West End at the moment - 'Standing at the Skys Edge'. This musical follows the history of a landmark housing estate in Sheffield and charts the hopes and dreams of three generations over 6 decades, navigating the themes of love, loss and survival.

What can we expect from the performance?

Love Letter to Halton will explore the power of community and what it is we call home, documenting personal stories of hopes, dreams, poverty, immigration, migration, decline and changes in industry and most of all the people who have lived here, which will all be curated into a unique performance piece. Halton has always had such a huge connection with its community, and it is these stories that are deep rooted in the history and heritage and inspire Halton's residents today.

I am extremely honoured and proud to be a Chair for Halton Heritage Partnership as it plays a vital role in keeping the love for Halton's heritage alive.

“Bringing together different groups, such as history groups, local museums and many more, who all care passionately about local heritage.”

How will the performance be brought to life?

It is born of, and created for, the people of Halton. using stories gathered from the local community. Kate Allerston and Chris Bastock (A Place for Us CIC) curated a script which will be delivered by the professional storyteller Gav Cross; this will be a Love Letter for Halton's relationship with its residents.

Tell us how you have uncovered the stories?

The community have been asked to uncover things like: What is the story of the house/flat you live in who might have lived there 50 years ago? Who lives there now? Any connections? How has the neighbourhood has changed in 50 years? Any unusual items found from houses/areas – stories around these? Any unsolved/strange mysteries from the place you live (50 years or more old)? Community

stories from where you live? Funny anecdotes from the community from the past 5 decades?

Where can people see it?

The performance will take place at Norton Priory, in September followed by a week-long tour around some of Halton's community venues.

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

BY NORTON PRIORY MUSEUM TRUST

To celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Halton Borough, a very special performance will take place at Norton Priory on 6th September at 4:00pm. This performance, by renowned storyteller Gav Cross, will explore what has helped build Halton's identity over the past 50 years. **This is a FREE event, but book your space on our website to avoid missing out!**

Norton Priory Museum & Gardens, Tudor Rd, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1SX

Friday 6th Sept 16:00-18:00 • nortonpriory.org

Performance • Performance Arts • Museum/Gallery/Library/Archive



- Full wheelchair access
- Accessible toilets
- Assistance dogs welcome
- Changing Places toilets
- Roadside parking
- Hearing loop
- Pushchair friendly
- Sign Language
- Disabled Parking

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

BY ST MARY'S CHURCH WIDNES

Come along to St Mary's in West Bank to explore the past, present and future of this historic Grade II* listed church and the heritage of its local community. Follow our family friendly trail and join Hazlehurst Studios for a 'Snap & Social' session.

St Mary's Church, St Mary's Road, West Bank, Widnes, WA8 0DP

Sat 7th Sept 10:00-16:00
For more info visit
facebook.com/stmaryswb

Exhibition • Local History • Historic Building/Park/Garden



CIRCULAR HERITAGE WALK - NORTON PRIORY TO HALTON CASTLE

BY INDEPENDENT
(Member of u3a and delegate to Heritage Partnership)

A two hour walk (approx four miles) from Norton Priory to Halton Castle. The walk will focus on the architecture of Runcorn New Town

and Halton Village - including the Bridgewater Canal and Halton Castle.

Norton Priory Museum & Gardens Car Park, Tudor Rd, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1SX

Sun 8th Sept at 11:00

To book your place, please email
bissenden146@btinternet.com

(Max 20 people)

Walk/tour • Local History • Historic Building/Park/Gardens



***Partial wheelchair access or partial access in certain areas.**

LIVE TALKS AND PICTURE DISPLAYS

BY DARESBUY DISTRICT HERITAGE GROUP

Talk by various speakers on theme in Lewis Carroll Centre.

Lewis Carroll Centre, Daresbury, Warrington WA4 4AE

Weds 11th Sept 19:00 • ddhg.org.uk

Talk • Local History • Education



HAZLEHURST STUDIOS OPEN DAY

BY HAZLEHURST STUDIOS

Visit our renovated Grade II listed building at 71 High Street and the adjoining original premises at 73a High Street. See our latest exhibition, meet resident artists, join workshops, and purchase artwork.

71 High Street, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1AH

Thurs 12th Sept 13:00-20:00

It is an open door event, but we would encourage to book a free ticket via our website
hazlehurststudios.co.uk/events
Also check out our other FREE events including The Big Halton Heritage Nature Watch!

Site opening • Visual Arts • Historic Building



OPEN EVENING & "NETWORKS" DISPLAY

BY RUNCORN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Discover our earliest appearance on the map in Saxon times, the first roads and how they brought new

people to our town. See how our River Mersey location was key to keeping the Vikings out of Mercia, and how important our waterways were to the start of the Industrial Revolution, opening access and trade to the rest of the world.

Wicksten Drive Christian Centre, Runcorn, WA7 5UX

Friday 13th September 19:00

For more info visit: facebook.com/RuncornDistrictHistoricalSociety

Exhibition • Local History • Church Hall



ST LUKE'S HERITAGE DAY

BY ST LUKE'S PARISH CHURCH

Tours of the ancient church, graveyard and historic Village of Farnworth. Light refreshments available.

St Luke's Parish Church, Farnworth Street, Widnes, WA8 9HU

Sat 14th Sept 10:00-16:00

st-luke.co.uk

Walk/Tour • Local History • Faith



DISPLAY AT HATTON SHOW

BY DARESBUY DISTRICT HERITAGE GROUP

The Hatton and District Show Society was founded in the 1890s and holds an annual event.

An exhibition of home and garden skills, craftsmanship showcasing the very best of rural traditions. The Hatton Show boasts sections

including farm, domestic, junior, horticulture, handicraft and equestrian events. There are a wide range of horticultural classes to compete in and there are fifteen classes for juniors.

Field opposite Daresbury Church, Daresbury, WA4 4AE

Sat 14th Sept 13:00-16:00

hattonshow.wordpress.com

Exhibition • Local History • Educational



HERITAGE OPEN DAY EVENTS

BY CATALYST

Come and take part in a guided walk, explore the routes, networks and connections across the local area and see some fascinating artefacts, reminders of the once busy industrial site. Visit our archive collection where you can find rarely seen artefacts. Discover the connections between the local industry, the soap works and the families in our local community.

Explore the Interactive galleries, learn about the history of the local area or marvel at the 360 degree views from our glass-walled rooftop Observatory Gallery where we'll be hosting Runcorn and Widnes Historical Societies and representatives from the Daniel Adamson Steamship!

Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum, Mersey Road, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 0DF

Sat 14th September 10:00-17:00
Sun 15th September 10:00-17:00

catalyst.org.uk

Site Opening • Local History • Museum/Gallery/Library/Archive





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Quirky Things to see and do!

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scan the QR code or go to:

visithalton.co.uk



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*See website for full T&Cs



SCIENCE, INDUSTRY, STONE ROSES AND PROMENADE STROLLS WEST BANK

As you stand here today it's hard to imagine how West Bank, Spike Island and the Sankey Canal all played a pivotal role in the Industrial Revolution. The area's location and waterways made it the perfect place to pioneer copper, soap, and chemicals production.

As you look out over the River Mersey, you'll see the ultra-modern Gateway Bridge cutting across the water and through the horizon. Along the riverbank

you'll discover hints of Halton's past that punctuate West Bank and Victoria promenade.



CATALYST SCIENCE DISCOVERY CENTRE AND MUSEUM

A great place to start and learn about the history of the area is at Catalyst, which is partially housed in the Tower Building, one of the only remaining buildings from the chemical industry era.

Once inside you can explore the award-winning galleries, visit the stunning interactive theatre, experience fun activities in the lab or travel 30m above the river Mersey in the external glass lift to the glass walled observatory gallery, you'll be rewarded with spectacular 360-degree views across the Northwest and Wales! The museum archive holds a wide collection of material from the local chemical industry including Towers, ICI, Brunner Mond and McKechnie. You can also visit the gift shop and Elements Cafe, the perfect place to enjoy a tasty snack whilst admiring the riverside views, before you see more.

VIEWPOINT OUTSIDE CATALYST

From the elevated viewpoint by the Catalyst entrance, you get a beautiful vantage point of West Bank & Spike Island.

Take note of how much greenery is in the area, and contrast this with how the space looked from 1847-1970s when the land was covered in large grey sheds, emitted black smoke from chimneys due to the burning of coal, and was buried beneath a noxious layer of gases that killed vegetation in the area.



ONE STEP
DISCOVER
AT A TIME



SANKEY CANAL

Heading down from the Catalyst you'll come to The Sankey Canal constructed in 1757, it was the very first industrial era canal in Britain.

The 18th century canal was originally created to transport coal from the numerous mines in St Helens and surrounding areas down to the River Mersey, shipping them to Liverpool, the Canal initially ended near Warrington, before being extended to West Bank in 1833. Nowadays, boats on the canal are solely for pleasure purposes, and the canal is a peaceful home for swans and geese. However, this

waterway still has a rich history of much cargo being moved through the Sankey Canal Locks, where you can cross to access Spike Island.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can join the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) from the canal locks. The Trail runs a total of 346km from Southport to the North Sea Coast. From here the Trail runs along the riverside to Pickering's Pasture to the west and along the canal to Fiddler's Ferry going east

SPIKE ISLAND

This artificial island formed when the Sankey Canal was extended cutting it adrift from Widnes in 1833. The land remained relatively untouched until in 1847, when the chemist and industrialist, John Hutchinson visited the area and observed the waterway links to Liverpool and Manchester on the Mersey. He decided it was the ideal place for a Leblanc chemical manufacturing factory.

Spike Island would become effectively the birthplace of the British chemical industry. By the late 19th century, the huge factories established by Hutchinson and Gossage would completely dominate the area. Thousands of workers poured into Widnes, with many



FLOWING WITH
HISTORY

DID YOU KNOW?

Back in 1990 local band, The Stone Roses performed their legendary Spike Island gig in front of 28,000 fans. The show would enter indie folklore, as a milestone night in British music history and be immortalised in a 2013 film

railway lines criss-crossing the island. Cargo boats would constantly traverse the Sankey Canal, carrying their cargo to the port of the River Mersey and from there to the world beyond. During World War II, the island was used as a storage depot for munitions and was heavily bombed by the Germans. After the war, the island was used as a landfill site, in the seventies it contained

abandoned chemical factories, rail lines, disused canal and industrial dockage, and extensive chemical pollution. In modern years, following much hard work particularly between 1975-1982, the land has been reclaimed and is now a thriving nature reserve and a welcome oasis in the middle of the bustling town of Widnes. You can follow the pathways and trails, hearing the distant echoes of the Stone Roses and smelling the scents of the Island's industrial past.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Transporter Bridge was opened in 1905 and for the first time ever, it enabled vehicles to travel between Widnes and Runcorn without having to make the 21km journey via Warrington

VICTORIA PROMENADE

From Spike Island just follow the river, you'll reach the Victorian Promenade, popular with the Victorians before the building of the transporter bridge, when the River Mersey offered fresh air with uninterrupted views of the Cheshire countryside.

The area had been regarded as a holiday resort, previously known as Wood-end 150 years earlier. The promenade itself is dotted with historic architecture including the local cottage hospital for the Welsh community who lived in West Bank and the square tower of St Mary's Church rises above the houses. Now the riverside trail takes you past Community Gardens, play area and Victoria Gardens, with views of Runcorn on the south side of river and straight in front of you you'll see the iconic Silver Jubilee Bridge. At the end of the Promenade, you'll come to other scenic and historic spots, including Transporter Bridge Powerhouse, the Mersey Inn and remnants of the ferry service can be seen at the bottom of the slope.



Start point: Car Park at the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum, WA8 0DF

1 CATALYST

- Start at the Catalyst,
- explore the Museum and
- move onto to the vantage
- point to soak up the vistas
- just outside the entrance.

2 VIEWPOINT OUTSIDE CATALYST

- From this point you'll be
- able to see most of your
- walk, across the open
- parkland in front of the
- Catalyst you'll get views
- of the Mersey with the
- pathways along the riverside.

3 SANKEY CANAL

- Taking the gradual pathway
- down from the Catalyst
- you'll see the Sankey Canal
- and locks, that bridge
- Widnes to Spike Island.
- Crossing over the locks
- you can explore the Island
- and watching the boats,
- swans and other wildlife of
- the nature reserve.

4 SPIKE ISLAND

- Following the pathed trail
- that hugs the banks of the
- Mersey, the Silver Jubilee
- Bridge will be in view.
- Follow the circular route
- anti-clockwise around
- the Island, you'll pass the
- through woodland and the
- remains of the old brick

5 VICTORIA PROMENADE

Back across the locks head along the riverside path as it gradually slopes up onto Terrace Road. Carrying along the Road you'll see the Promenade on your left and St Mary's Church on your right. You'll continue along St Mary's Road and as you follow the bend, you'll see the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the end of the Promenade.

Mix of pavements with gentle inclines, tracks and promenades which are all fully accessible.

DISTANCE
3 km
APPROX

TIME
40 min
APPROX



ZEPPELINS, RED ADMIRALS, A WAR HERO AND A HIT RECORD

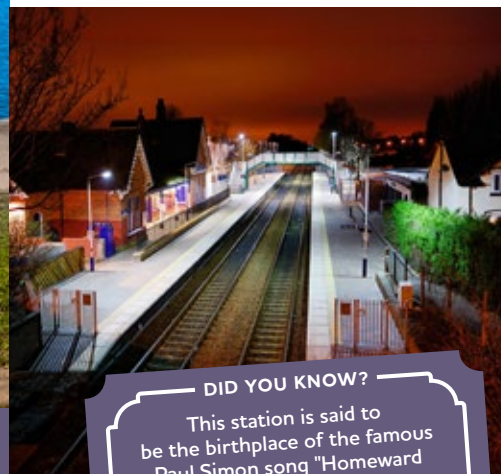
VICTORIA PARK

Who'd have thought a small pocket of Widnes could be filled with so much history and significance, from the station to one of the town's oldest parks, this area has plenty of tales to tell, it has inspired world famous musicians and immortalized a Victoria Cross awardee.

Pick up your trail at Widnes Station, which is more than just a railway station. Musical myths say it was the birthplace of a global hit single! Find the inspiring open space of Victoria Park, with its Butterfly House and bandstand, once the stage for the world famous Foden

Brass Band. Still curious? Continue and discover the stunning Grade II listed St Bede's Church and try to solve the mystery of Appleton Hall. So, what are you waiting for, it's time to make tracks...

At Widnes Station
in 1965
Paul Simon
wrote the song
Homeward Bound



DID YOU KNOW?
This station is said to be the birthplace of the famous Paul Simon song "Homeward Bound", which Paul Simon wrote sitting on the platform whilst waiting for a train.

WIDNES RAILWAY STATION

The Station dates back to 1st August 1873 and was originally opened as Farnworth station. A stop was added to the railway line between Glazebrook and Cressington & Grassendale.

It's a twin-pavilion building, which was at the time very common of the Cheshire Lines Committee. However, this station has a Nineteenth-century carved stone drinking fountain set against the station wall, which wasn't so common.

The station, which was refurbished in 2009, is designated as a Grade II listed building by English Heritage and was also immortalised due to a famous singer songwriter who caught a train from Widnes, which inspired his hit song. From Birchfield Road, which bridges the train tracks, you get an immediate sense of the importance of bridges in Halton's heritage, which all play a vital role in connecting Widnes and Runcorn.

VICTORIA PARK

As you enter one the oldest parks in Widnes, you'll be hit with a sense of calm in your surroundings. The green and serene space dating back to the late Nineteenth-century, officially opened in 1900 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

You'll see many points of interest and historical features as you make your way around the park, designed by the renowned landscape architect Thomas Mawson, who was responsible for many of the UK's most famous parks and gardens.

VICTORIA PARK LAKE

The lake is one of the most picturesque features of the Park, originally created as a reservoir to supply water to the nearby chemical industry. Today, it's a popular spot for a variety of wildlife, including ducks, swans, and geese.

DID YOU KNOW?
Foden's Brass Band has over 100 years of history and are still in demand today, playing all over the world



THE BANDSTAND

At the central hub of the park you'll bet transported back to pre-WWII era and imagine watching Foden's Brass Band play here. The band earned £35- £40 each time when they played here in the 1920s and 30s. The bandstand is a refurbished version of the original and frequently showcases free concerts from local musicians.

WAR MEMORIAL

Take a moment to appreciate the striking the Grade II war memorial, which is more than 16m high and with detailed carvings. Designed by Harold E Davies and unveiled by the 17th Earl of Derby in a ceremony on 28th September 1921 after a civic parade from Widnes Town Hall.

The memorial cost £6,000 and was paid for by public subscription. The sculptural additions were undertaken by the national artist Herbert Tyson Smith and it is a designated Grade II listed building.



DID YOU KNOW?
As part of the raid, five Zeppelins dropped bombs onto Widnes and the nearby towns of Ince and Wigan

MILESTONE MARKER

Close to the War memorial you'll see the damaged local milestone marker which was caused by the Zeppelin raid.

Installed with a plaque commemorating the last effective Zeppelin air raid of World War I in England - the only one on Lancashire.

— PIT STOP —

Grab a bite to eat, a scoop of Gelato or an Italian coffee at Esposito's Deli in the park.



GLADSTONE MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

Another prominent feature within the park is the fountain, a fitting tribute to one of Britain's greatest Prime Ministers, William Ewart Gladstone. He was born in Liverpool to Scottish parents and went on to become British Prime Minister for over 12 years cumulatively, unusual in that it is made completely from terracotta tiles



DID YOU KNOW?
William Gladstone's popularity with the working-class led to him being nicknamed at the time "The People's William"

MOTTERSHEAD STATUE

Just near the main Birchfield Road Park entrance is Mottershead statue, a touching tribute to Sgt Mottershead, a Widnes war hero. His plane was ignited by German fire over the Western Front in January 1917, but he saved the life of his observer by landing behind British lines. Sadly, he died from his injuries and was buried in France. Sgt Mottershead was awarded the prestigious Victoria Cross posthumously, with his wife being presented with her late husband's medal by King George V in London in June 1917.



THE GLASSHOUSES AND TROPICAL BUTTERFLY HOUSE

Other highlights of the park are The Glasshouses and Tropical Butterfly House.

The Glasshouse is run by volunteers, explore 50 exotic butterflies from all over the world. If you fancy a flutter around Butterfly House. Opens between May and September, Saturday and Sunday 10.30am-1pm.





APPLETON VILLAGE & ST BEDE'S CHURCH

Leaving the park from the south meander down to the historic Appleton Village. Recorded as Epletune in the Domesday Book of 1086, it means 'a settlement where apples grow'. The village has lots of fascinating history, including the mystery of Appleton Hall.

FUN FACT

The Church building costs came to £3,000, which may not sound much today, but factoring in inflation is equivalent to equivalent to £350,000 in 2023

You will come to centre of the village where you will see the active St Bede's Roman Catholic parish church, which is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. It was completed in 1847 and is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade II listed building. The church was designed by architects Weightman and Hadfield, on land donated by members of the local Dennett family. Wealthy locals of their time, the Dennett family also paid towards the cost of the building.

After consecration of the church on 22nd September 1847, the bishop of Liverpool (Revd Alexander Goss) consecrated the original church bell in May 1856. This bell was replaced in 1879 with the new bell, again blessed by the bishop of Liverpool, which was then Revd Bernard O'Reilly, the 1856 bell survives and remains today.



GIVE IT A GO

CAN YOU TRACE THE LOCATION OF APPLETON HALL?

Pictures of the 16th century hall, which was built for the Appleton's, prove its existence, but local experts and historians can't quite agree where exactly on the road it was.

On the corner of Appleton Village and Birchfield Road is thought to be the site of Appleton Hall, its location seems is a mystery but, immediately as you turn into Birchfield Road, the row of houses on the right is called Pineapple Terrace, and it is thought that Appleton Hall had pineapple stoves or glass frames for the cultivation

of pineapples. Is that a clue to where the grand hall once stood?



Start point: Widnes Station Car Park, Victoria Avenue, Widnes, WA8 7TJ

1 WIDNES RAILWAY STATION

- Whether you start at the Station or make it your last stop, the fascinating history will stop you in your tracks.
- From Widnes Station head south on Victoria Avenue and continue south on Birchfield Road, you'll see an entrance to Victoria Park on the opposite side of the Road.

2 VICTORIA PARK

- From the north of the park you can stroll through the open spaces of Victoria Park. There's plenty to see including the lake, Bandstand, Memorials and even a Butterfly House.
- Soak up all the history in beautiful surroundings and treat yourself to few scoops of Gelato at Esposito's.

- You can leave the park from the main south entrance on Birchfield Road onto the equally beautiful Appleton Village.

3 APPLETON VILLAGE & ST BEDE'S CHURCH

As you exit the Park, follow Birchfield Road southwards, then turn left and you'll discover Appleton Village. Meander through this historic hamlet to find St Bede's Church and try to solve the mystery of Appleton Hall.



A MAD HATTER, ENCHANTING WOODLANDS AND FAMOUS FOOTSTEPS

DARESBURY

Once you discover the small, charming Village of Daresbury, you'll feel a world away in this wonderland waiting to be explored.

Take a stroll around 'The Birthplace' of one of the world's best loved writers, Lewis Carroll and you'll be inspired by

the idyllic surrounding that will make you curiouser and curiouser to find out more.

RING O'BELLS

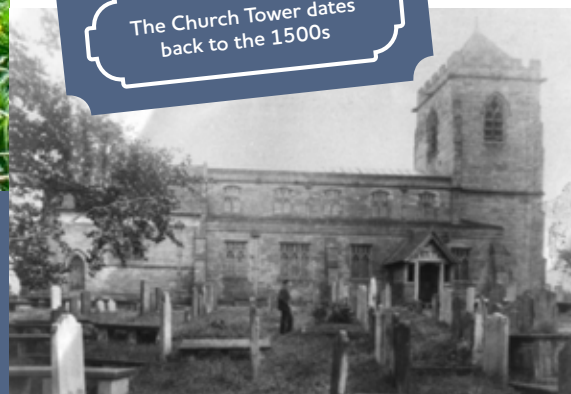
As you step out of the church grounds, you'll see the Ring O'Bells pub opposite, flanked by old cottages and a former smithy.

Originally Daresbury's courthouse. The early 19th century building still has a session room where court proceedings once took place. At the front of the pub, there is a listed old stone horse stop and trough decorated beautifully with flowers and hanging baskets. As well as a plethora of

original features at the Ring O'Bells pub, you can also enjoy a traditional pub menu serving the best of British seasonal dishes lovingly prepared by their talented chefs. So when you've built up an appetite and completed your wanderings it's the perfect place to refuel.



DID YOU KNOW?
The Church Tower dates back to the 1500s



ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Entering the church grounds you'll weave through the picturesque paths to the church. Lewis Carroll was baptised here and his father was also the much-loved vicar of the church for 16 years, from 1827 to 1843.

Once inside you can't leave without gazing at the magical stained-glass window in the Daniell Chapel, which illustrates all of Carroll's Characters from Alice in Wonderland, see how many you can find. Based on John Tenniel's illustrations and designed by glass artist Geoffrey Webb, the five scenes of the windows include the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, with the dormouse asleep in the teapot and an especially eccentric March Hare with straw in his hair. Make sure you spot the grinning Cheshire Cat too!





LEWIS CARROLL CENTRE

Adjoined to the church is the beautiful building of the Lewis Carroll Centre, which is dedicated to celebrating Daresbury's world-famous villager and writer.

Admission is free and through visual displays, you can delve deeper into the story that defined the man and how Daresbury inspired his writing, chart his timeline seeing all the things that Lewis Carroll saw as the young Charles Dodgson.

Over the centre door hangs the mission bell that used to call the canal folk to Revd Dodgson's floating chapel at Preston Brook.

Listen to the Audio programs that include readings of Carroll's work by local children and the famous performers Ken Dodd and Dillie Keane.



DID YOU KNOW?
Nine of Lewis Carroll's ten siblings were also born in the house

LEWIS CARROLL BIRTHPLACE

Approximately 1.5 miles from the village of Daresbury, lies the birthplace and home of Lewis Carroll, a parsonage which was destroyed by fire over 100 years ago.

Born in 1832 this is the site where Carroll spent the first 11 years of life. It's possible that his environment sparked the inspiration for him to write Alice's adventures years later.

Today you'll see a ground-level brick outline and wrought-iron sculptures, depicting where the original parsonage building once stood. You can let your imagination wander in Carroll's very own wonderland. The intricate iron workings serve as a fitting memorial to the writer, you'll also see a dormouse design covered well at this popular literary National Trust site.



PIT STOP

Grab a scoop of delicious artisan ice cream at **Daresbury Dairy**, if you take a slight detour before you turn onto Morphy Lane, take Newton Lane and you'll arrive at the Dairy.



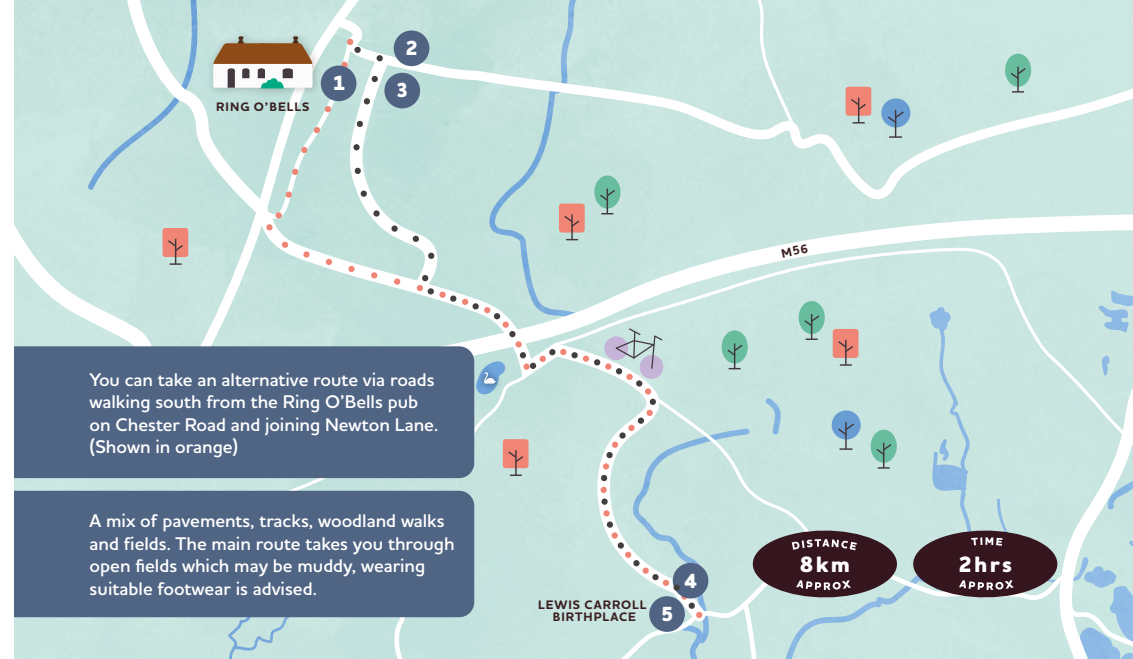
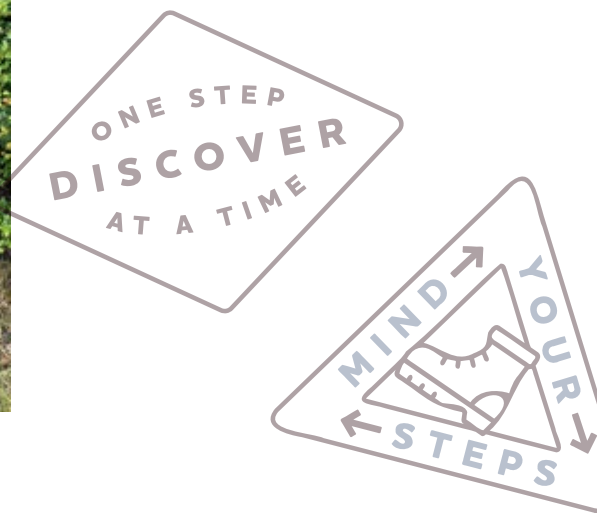


LEWIS CARROLL CENTENARY WOODLAND

Follow your trail to the Centenary Woodland, purchased by the Woodland Trust, with the help of the Lewis Carroll Birthplace Trust and planted in early 2000 to commemorate the centenary of the Writer's death.

Explore the hectare of woodland and you can imagine the setting of Carroll's Tulgey Wood in Wonderland or Through the Looking Glass. It could be the forest that never seems to end, home to many bizarre creatures, such as the Jabberwocky or the Bandersnatch.

Find the bench to sit, ponder and take in this magical place, then seek out the Millennium Feature comprising of a circular stand of six oaks around a commemorative tablet featuring Carroll's signature. When you're ready set off and head back to Daresbury Village.



You can take an alternative route via roads walking south from the Ring O'Bells pub on Chester Road and joining Newton Lane. (Shown in orange)

A mix of pavements, tracks, woodland walks and fields. The main route takes you through open fields which may be muddy, wearing suitable footwear is advised.

Start point: All Saint's Church, Daresbury Lane, Daresbury WA4 4AE

1 RING O'BELLS

- Your journey starts at
- the Ring O'Bells pub set
- within the historic village of
- Daresbury.

2 ALL SAINTS DARESBUY CHURCH

- Opposite the Ring O'Bells
- pub is the Church. Explore
- the grounds and inside,
- where you'll be enlightened
- by the influence Lewis
- Carroll had on this rural
- Anglican place of worship.

3 LEWIS CARROLL CENTRE

- Located in the extension
- of the Church is the Lewis
- Carroll Centre. Leaving

4 LEWIS CARROLL BIRTHPLACE

- Following the route down
- Morphany Lane you will
- reach the entrance gate

- the Centre and Church
- grounds by the main
- exit on Daresbury Lane,
- cross the road and head
- through the gated field.
- Continue south and look
- out to your left as you
- may catch a glimpse of
- remains Daresbury Hall.
- Passing through the fields
- and rolling countryside
- you'll reach Newton Lane.
- Turning left you'll pass
- several farms and cross
- over the bridge of the M56.
- Over the bridge you'll reach
- Summer Lane. Following
- the lane left you will see
- the signs for Lewis Carroll
- Birthplace, which will bring
- you to Morphany Lane
- where you go right.

- to Carroll's Birthplace,
- follow the white rabbits
- into the site. There are
- also interpretation signs
- that tell you all about the
- historic site and sculptures
- that celebrate the writer.

5 CENTENARY WOODLAND

- Adjacent to Carroll's
- birthplace is Cenenary
- Woodland, the wood was
- planted as two blocks of
- trees separated by a grass
- path ride that leads into
- a small glade which has
- a seat, here you'll find
- commemorative Lewis
- Carroll stone tablet, there's
- also a small pond by the
- eastern boundary of
- woodland. Once you've had
- chance to take in all your
- surroundings head back to
- Daresbury Village walking
- the same way.

ROUTES, NETWORKS AND CONNECTIONS

For this year's Heritage Open Days Festival we have created six unique trails that follow the theme: Routes, Networks and Connections, each trail will take you on a journey of discovery around our Borough. Retrace the **Routes** of our famous ancestors, travel the **Networks** of waterways, and roads that pathed the way for innovation and industry, and discover the **Connections** of our towns and villages that have bridged not only Borough but the world beyond. Take the steps and learn how each parish has influenced Halton's local heritage and national reputation as a pioneering place from the past to the present day.

- 1 **BRIDGES, BOBBIES, BOATS AND A BUSTLING TOWN**
RUNCORN OLD TOWN
- 2 **THATCHED HAMLET, FAMOUS GIANT AND 45FT LIGHTHOUSE**
HALE
- 3 **TREE LINED WALKWAYS, A TOWER AND MINATURE TRAIN**
RUNCORN TOWN PARK
- 4 **SCIENCE, INDUSTRY, STONE ROSES AND PROMENADE STROLLS**
WEST BANK
- 5 **ZEPPELINS, RED ADMIRALS, A WAR HERO AND A HIT RECORD**
VICTORIA PARK
- 6 **A MAD HATTER, ENCHANTING WOODS AND FAMOUS FOOTSTEPS**
DARESURY



SCAN HERE

TO DISCOVER
EVEN MORE
HALTON HERITAGE!



VISITHALTON.CO.UK



HALTONHERITAGE.CO.UK

SCAN HERE

TO FIND MORE FROM
THE HALTON HERITAGE
PARTNERSHIP



**VISIT
HALTON**



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND

THE CRUCIBLE OF CULTURE

THE CULTURAL VISION
FOR HALTON

2023-2030



OUR CULTURE COMMITMENT



Halton Borough Council is committed to ensuring that our borough is a place in which culture thrives and is nurtured. As a local authority, Halton will be the enabling force for the transformative change which the Crucible of Culture is founded upon.

Our commitment is highlighted throughout this Vision; here we put our names to that commitment. The Crucible of Culture will grow ever brighter as a result of this support for our borough’s cultural and creative sector.

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Foreword

When asked to write this foreword, I was reminded that writing is in itself an act of cultural engagement. The novel on the bedside table, the reference books on the library shelves, the diary we keep; all these are cultural touchstones, moments when humans interact with their own thoughts and those of others.

Culture is a difficult word to pin down. As a word, it can be where you are from, your beliefs, how you live your life. Here, it means the creative activity which engages you, which delights you, which makes your heart sing, or which – for a fortunate few – is what you do for a living.

Those who work in culture know its power. They know how a well-timed line in a pantomime can cause an audience to double over in laughter. They know how a song lyric about unrequited love can resonate with the listener's own experiences. That a musician playing a riff can induce instinctive toe-tapping. That an object or image from the past can help bring understanding to the present. That an artwork can provide hundreds of years of pleasure hanging on a wall of the homes of countless families. That a TV series can capture the attention of millions around the globe. In Halton, culture is all these things and more. It is your local theatre, your local

museum, your community venue, your library, your child's school, your local pub's live music slot... and many more.

I know that culture, creativity and heritage are important to all those who call Halton home and to those who visit our borough. This vision sets out Halton Borough Council's ambitions for the borough's cultural sector: as a local authority, we will work productively with cultural partners, funders and communities to deliver ambitious, innovative and dynamic creative activity with a strong link to Halton's past, present and future.

We find ourselves in a period of economic uncertainty, with a cost of living crisis and the continued impact of Covid. Culture was a constant companion for many through the pandemic, and remains a source of the 'feel good' moments in life for us all, boosting mental and physical wellbeing, bringing people together and providing

escapism from the realities of our current circumstances.

Despite these challenges, the period ahead brings bold and dynamic opportunities. A new library, an extension to the Borough's theatre and development for local creative industries and organisations. In 2024, Halton will celebrate its 50th anniversary, whilst 2026 sees the return of Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture to Halton.

I look forward to seeing this vision evolve, and to the delivery of a diverse portfolio of cultural activity that engages residents and visitors, and cements Halton as the crucible of culture. Our shared ambition is for Halton to step out of their doors and be met by world-class culture.

Clr Paul Nolan
Executive Board Member - Employment, Learning & Skills, Community & Culture



2024

Halton will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

2026

The return of Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture to Halton.



“Our shared ambition is for Halton to step out of their doors and be met by world-class culture.”

Context

2021 brought the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture to Halton. Much-awaited, this was Halton's moment to bring the region's cultural focus to this borough.



This borough has always been culturally alive. It's a place which acts as a crucible of culture, a nod to the borough's industrial roots, bringing together creative people, ideas, ambitions and dreams in response to a rich seam of heritage, creativity and sheer dynamism.

There is recognition that culture is a transformative power, providing change for the better and opportunities for

improvements in health, education and the economy. Halton is stronger with culture, and a stronger cultural sector has the ability to unlock the full cultural and creative potential of this proud and vibrant place.

This Vision has been informed by the consultation and resulting cultural strategy report, undertaken by Art Reach in 2022. The report was commissioned

as Halton's response to the Borough of Culture successes and the desire by the local authority to build a legacy for the Borough of Culture year and to ensure Halton is a place in which cultural thrives and is championed.

The Crucible of Culture

The Cultural Vision for Halton Borough is accompanied by an Action Plan, which sets out the pathway for future cultural development and growth across the borough.



The Crucible of Culture forms the bright centre of this vision.

Halton comprises of the two towns of Runcorn and Widnes, surrounded by smaller communities, each with their own identity. These communities include the civic parishes of Daresbury, Hale, Halebank, Moore, Preston Brook and Sandymoor. Since 2014, the unitary authority of Halton has been part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Whilst the global pandemic tempered the aspirations which the Borough of Culture brought, it did not alter the desire for change. A change in how culture is perceived and in where it sits. Culture HQ, based in one of the borough's key shopping centres, provided a literal shop window for culture, breaking down barriers and taking cultural excellence into the high street: quite simply, connecting everyday people with a cultural touchpoint during moments of everyday interactions.

Culture HQ provided residents with a magical Mr. Benn moment; an opportunity to step into the world of culture, feeling immersed and engaged with the experience and being empowered to feel part of that world. It's an everyday experience which should become the norm. Culture on the street corner. Culture created in Halton, by Halton's own, the product of our own crucible of culture.

This crucible, once lit, continues to burn. It burns brighter now as the legacy from the Borough of Culture continues.

This crucible of culture forms the bright centre of this Vision. We invite you to join Halton's journey to ensure that bright centre burns ever brighter as we reposition culture as a powerful force for positive change, personal growth and wellbeing, and economic success.



“This crucible, once lit, continues to burn. It burns brighter now as the legacy from the Borough of Culture continues.”

Our Vision

Halton is a crucible of culture, at a point of change. In this borough, run through by the mighty Mersey, culture thrives. The guardians of culture are venues, partner organisations and regular festivals and celebrations which populate this diverse and innovative borough. People value culture, engage with culture and, through culture, celebrate the richness of Haltonian ambition.



Heritage has forged the borough and the stories borne from the shared history of residents, past, present and future, continue to shape and influence creative outputs. Our history continues to shape our lives and is reflected throughout the cultural landscape.

Through our cultural aspirations, ignited by the Liverpool City Region's Borough of Culture in 2021, we can improve health and wellbeing, build sustainability into the economy and champion the 'feel good' moments. This is Halton's land, this is the story of proud communities looking for a more positive, more vibrant and more diverse future.

The Vision reflects the sense of strong community, heritage, self-starting creativity and collaborative working that exists in Halton. The combination of these factors forms the foundation from which to realise the full cultural potential of Halton. More than a neighbouring borough of the City of Liverpool, Halton has huge potential to become a cultural destination in its own right. The Borough of Culture showed what was possible. It demonstrated what

could be achieved. Even against the backdrop of a global pandemic, culture shone through as an undimable light in Halton.

This vision for culture capitalises on that, it defines and promotes new and existing strategic partnerships, and in so doing increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding, such as from Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Culture can be analogue, for example, the word on the page, the object in a museum case, the performance on the stage. It can also be digital, such as an augmented reality installation, a virtual museum, or a heritage Facebook page. Whatever its form, it is always about people: social connections and opportunities, sharing and (lifelong) learning, better understanding about us and our place in the world.

Set against an industrial past, Halton is a collection of proud and dynamic communities, studded with cultural excellence and bold creative aspirations. The cultural canvas of

the borough reveals theatre, music, heritage, visual arts and performing arts. It brings together professionals, amateurs, volunteers and audiences to create a rich seam of opportunity and talent. These are the elements which when freed to achieve their potential will combine to create something new. Something bright. Something magical. Something Halton. This is our commitment, as a local authority, to connect organisations at all levels, to help forge new partnerships and to champion culture at every opportunity. This is our crucible. These are our people. Halton's culture is for everybody. We invite people from across the sector and beyond to join us on a journey which will take us to the next Borough of Culture in 2026 and onto 2030, when the Vision will be reviewed.

We will work to enable our cultural sector to become a shining light in this crucible of change, which will draw in new audiences and build on the strong foundations which already exist in the borough. We have identified four priorities, the Elements of Culture, which when combined will create new programmes of activity and opportunities for our children and young people, right through to our most experienced residents.

“Even against the backdrop of a global pandemic, culture shone through as an undimable light in Halton Borough.”

Our Vision is to establish Halton as the crucible of culture, bringing together elements of excellence to create a new, vibrant cultural economy, improving health and wellbeing for residents and visitors alike, whilst building a strong economic platform and creative opportunities for all.

Introducing the 4 Elements of Culture

These elements have been established through consultation with Halton's Cultural Sector and together provide the basis for a new way of working between Halton Borough Council and those organisations, be they professional, amateur, or volunteer-led, which form the bedrock of the Borough's vibrant cultural sector.



LEADERSHIP

The First Element

Leadership: Providing a conduit between Halton Borough Council and the Borough's Cultural Sector to maximise opportunities and establish culture as a cross-cutting priority that forms a golden thread through the Council's different agendas.

COMMUNICATION

The Second Element

Communication: To increase awareness of cultural opportunities and activities in Halton, both with residents and with visitors. Halton has an active cultural sector, the vibrancy and impact of which can only be enhanced through heightened public awareness.

DIVERSITY

The Third Element

Diversity: To ensure programming speaks to the widest possible audience, providing a voice and a creative space for everyone, whilst raising aspiration and providing talent and skill development opportunities for all ages.

DYNAMISM

The Fourth Element

Dynamism: To enable aspiration, ambition and creative excellence to flourish across the Borough, through supporting bold and energetic programming at a Borough-wide level, showcasing creative confidence at the heart of the crucible of culture.



FUNDING: THE AGENT OF CHANGE

These 4 elements are not complete on their own. Alongside the 4 Elements of Culture sits Funding, the Agent of Change.

Funding: The 4 Elements of Culture require a unifying factor to bond them together and bring about change. That bond is provided by Funding. For change to happen in Halton's Crucible of Culture, funding is necessary... it is the 'agent of change', and the Four Elements are the enabling forces that will support the unlocking of external funding to deliver the ambition outlined in this Vision.

LEADERSHIP

The First Element of Culture

This Vision establishes Halton Borough Council as the enabler of cultural change in the borough. The value of culture and of the borough's active and successful cultural sector is recognised and championed at the highest levels, by both the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Together, these two roles will work to raise awareness of the power of culture to improve both mental and physical wellbeing and to grow Halton's economic sector, bringing in more jobs and more opportunities. Two posts will sit alongside existing Council departments to directly engage with the Cultural Sector. These are an Events post and a Cultural Officer post. Together, these roles will support the sector in delivery of key annual events and festivals and in forging deeper connections, both within and outside the sector. The Cultural Officer role will also provide a bridge between the sector and external funding bodies to maximise



the flow of cultural investment into the Borough. Leadership also resides within the sector itself, through Cultivate and Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP). Cultivate comprises of a number of professional-led organisations and includes Council representation, whilst HHP represents over 20 volunteer-led heritage organisations.

Through strong leadership, culture will thrive, providing everybody, across the borough and beyond, with the opportunity to enjoy world-class cultural activities which have been forged in Halton, the Crucible of Culture.

Our Leadership Commitment

1

To be advocates for Halton's Cultural Sector at all levels and to embed culture in the council as a part of statutory services, including Education, Economic Development and Health.

2

To ensure Halton has a voice both within and outside of the region and with key funding bodies.

3

To support and champion leadership from within the cultural sector, with the council acting in a facilitatory capacity, enabling Halton's cultural sector to be self-sufficient, through providing quality venues and facilities, alongside strong cultural connections.

COMMUNICATION

The Second Element of Culture

Communication is central to the success of this Vision. With increasing levels of cultural activity across the borough, comes a call to raise awareness of, and engagement levels in, creative opportunities for all.

Within this element is a recognition that communication is not only about levels of engagement as audiences, but also as participants. Halton is alive with opportunities for creatives to produce and curate work, be they professionals or amateurs, younger or more senior. But it runs deeper than that. Awareness of opportunities for skills development, to give something back, to be socially – and culturally – connected are all part of the canvas which communication must cover. Our vibrant cultural sector relies on volunteers to bring added value, to share passions for art and heritage and to be actively involved in the vibrancy of the Haltonian cultural landscape.

Here, communication means raising awareness of opportunities for engagement in cultural and creative opportunities at every level, a call to action for us all, for everyone, everywhere to hear the clarion call and to be part of the crucible of culture as individual elements: a part of the whole, a part of Halton's creative picture. Working with Cultivate and HHP, Halton Borough Council will ensure that culture in Halton is visible as never before. That people know how, where and when they can be involved, and that audiences for cultural activities grow. Those same audiences will be encouraged to be 'Culture Champions' sharing experiences with friends and families in person and through their own social media accounts using the #CrucibleOfCulture and #HaltonHighlights tags to unite their stories and experiences.



Our Communication Commitment

1

To establish recognised 'go to' places for cultural activities across Halton, uniting people with opportunities to be engaged and to capitalise on visitor economy programmes of work, including Visit Halton.

2

To promote opportunities for volunteering to enhance and grow the cultural sector, whilst also ensuring the amateur sector is included in the conversation.

3

To encourage our residents and visitors to be active engagers and 'Culture Champions', using their own social media accounts and our dedicated hashtags to champion the cultural activities they have engaged with and enjoyed.



DIVERSITY

The Third Element of Culture

The bold vision outlined here is for everyone, everywhere to access culture. It's about sharing Halton's creative capital with residents, but also welcoming people into our Borough to share our artistic ambition and our Halton highlights. We all need a stage, a place to create, a platform from which to share. From the everyday sharing of stories over a pint in the pub, to watching a world-class performance in the theatre, each of us has a moment when we shine. We become our own crucibles of culture, adding bright spots and moments of inspiration to Halton's creative canvas. We are also each different. The cultural activities we enjoy are varied. The places we come from are different. Our needs as individuals flex and change over time. This individual and collective diversity matters. We represent different genders, abilities, age groups, ethnicities, sexual preferences and religious beliefs. We may rely on

technology to improve our vision or hearing, we may use wheelchairs or have 'unseen' differences, such as being autistic. Our differences should unite us as humans. We are all the same.

The crucible of culture in Halton reflects this. Through accessible performances and exhibitions, and equality of opportunity for all creatives, we will build a fully inclusive cultural canvas which reflects the diversity of us as individuals. Our programme will be rich and varied, from small intimate experiences to stadium-filling concerts, and from community co-created installations to internationally recognised performances, our culture will speak for everyone. Our approach will ensure equity of treatment for all.

The power of culture to support mental and physical wellbeing is recognised, via social prescribing, combatting social isolation, enjoying shared experiences, creating artwork, giving something back as a volunteer, or learning and developing new skills. Culture does all these things: our vision ensures this contribution is recognised and championed.

We will champion opportunities for skill and talent development, reaching out to children and young people to provide experiences and opportunities in their own communities: our talent will be home-grown, nurtured through the crucible of culture. Our Vision will ensure programming speaks to the widest possible audience, providing a voice and a creative space for everyone, whilst raising aspiration and providing talent and skill development

Our Diversity Commitment

1

To actively support a cultural canvas which is inclusive in content, form and messaging. In the crucible of culture everyone is welcome to play a part, either on the stage, in the wings or in the audience. Halton's culture is for everyone, now and always.

2

To listen to the needs of our cultural sector partners and organisations and ensure cultural interventions are a central part of the borough's strategy for improved health and wellbeing for all residents.

3

To work with our educators, at all levels, to ensure access is readily available for children and young people throughout their development, from Early Years sessions in libraries to opportunities to perform and showcase work and talent, developing integrated lifelong learning through cultural endeavours.

DYNAMISM

The Fourth Element of Culture

Our vision is bold, dynamic and innovative. The programming that the crucible of culture inspires will be energetic and will showcase the creative confidence which runs through the sector. Our cultural canvas is varied, with a network of venues and spaces in which to create, to perform, to animate.

We know Halton's creative sector is up to the challenge and is keen to be part of a step change in the role culture plays in the Borough. Through Cultivate and HHP members, combined with Liverpool City Region programmes and Halton Borough Council's own strategic direction, we will ensure culture is at the centre of Halton's success. In the crucible of culture, we will provide the spark to start the change. We will support the growth of the sector through external funding opportunities, through conversations at regional and national levels and we will share the ambitions of the cultural



sector. Creative platforms within Halton will be opened up, bringing vibrancy to the sector and supporting health and wellbeing outcomes through those touched by the programme.

Through nurturing creative excellence, the cultural sector will build sustainability, becoming a 'go to place' for those seeking quality experiences. Those seekers of experience will, in turn, support a vibrant cultural economy, helping grow businesses and attract new investment into the borough. Building quality 'doorstep' cultural and creative opportunities for residents creates a desirable place to live and a place to set up new businesses and attract new workforces. Our ambition is that no one in Halton should be more than 10 minutes from a cultural event or experience. Together with the sector, we will celebrate accidental interactions with culture, alongside those long-awaited, venue-filling performances. Our audiences will be on the edge of their seats as they lose themselves in the creative products of Halton's crucible of culture.

Our Dynamism Commitment

1

To commit to ongoing consultation with the cultural sector and to work together to unlock new opportunities.

2

To support the sector to unlock external funding to continue to increase quality creative output which delivers the step-change the sector is so keen to achieve.

3

To ensure the crucible of culture is at the centre of wider strategic planning, using innovative creative interventions to capitalise on the 'soft power' of culture to grow the economy and support mental and physical wellbeing.



“With increased external funding success comes greater activity: the crucible of culture becomes more active, vibrant, hotter.”

FUNDING

The Agent of Change

In the crucible of culture, an enabling force is needed to spark or trigger the reaction between the elements. That ‘agent of change’ is funding. The cultural sector needs funding to be sustainable and resilient. Funding can come from two main sources: trading income and non-trading income. Trading income is that which is earned, whilst non-trading income comprises grants, sponsorship and donations.

Non-trading income can be used to build resilience and to grow trading income. For many cultural practitioners, trading income comes from fees and / or ticket sales. Halton’s cultural sector has in the past received lower levels of non-trading income from external funding bodies than the national average. The borough has enjoyed success in grant applications headed by Halton Borough Council, and using the Four Elements of Culture, the success rate of

applications from cultural organisations in the borough will increase.

Those organisations will grow in confidence and ambition, as the demand grows from residents and visitors to the borough alike. With more activity taking place, in more spaces and more frequently, the desire for quality creative installations and performances will grow. With increased external funding success comes greater activity: the crucible of culture becomes more active, vibrant, hotter. As the critical mass of culture grows, so do opportunities for increased inward investment.

Key external funding partners within the cultural arena include Art Fund, Arts Council England (ACE), Clore Duffield Foundation, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Theatres Trust.



Our Funding Commitment

1

Halton Borough Council’s Programmes Office and Community Development Team will work with local organisations, including at grass root level, to facilitate and secure funding to allow cultural growth across the borough to be nurtured.

2

A dedicated officer will lead on Halton’s Visitor Economy, ensuring that culture and cultural activity is a key driver within the visitor economy.

3

The Council will engage with key funding bodies, sharing the Crucible of Culture and its aspirations and raising awareness of the need for cultural investment within Halton to realise this ambition.

What Next?

With a stronger and increasingly vibrant cultural sector comes new opportunities, attracting inward investment and developing the visitor economy. In this place, forged of industry and canal-crossed, emerges a new industry of creative innovation and excellence. Born of the crucible of culture, this new-found drive and determination will enhance and enrich the borough. As cultural sector sustainability grows, so too will that of the wider economy. Culturally richer and financially richer.



The council will work to ensure that money being spent on regeneration and facilities improvements are coordinated through a Culture Group headed by Cultivate and its representatives. The council will have a role within the Culture Group and will forge a new way of working between the council, private sector and third sector organisations, establishing a cultural partnership delivery model. A new Culture Officer post will be recruited to by the council, underlining local authority commitment to this Vision and cementing Halton's place as the crucible of culture. Alongside this, a cultural action plan has been developed, the delivery of which will be central to the translation from cultural ambition on the page, to cultural reality in Halton's communities. The action plan, which sits alongside this Vision, will be a live document, adapting to community aspiration and need and working in tandem with the priorities of the Vision and will be a published document.

Halton's aspirations include growing the number of National Portfolio

Organisations in the borough and looking to other Arts Council England programmes, such as Creative People and Places to deliver the necessary step change to the borough's cultural programming. As part of the Let's Create vision identified by Arts Council England, the crucible of culture is well-placed to capitalise on delivery of bold, innovative and dynamic content.

In finding places for cultural work to exist, the concept of spaces or 'community crucibles' emerges. As culture becomes a transformative force in the borough, Halton Borough Council will become a facilitator, or cultural broker, between arts groups and organisations and those who hold the keys to underused spaces, be they commercial or community spaces. There is a clear need for the establishment of exhibition and performance spaces, but also for start-up spaces and meeting spaces for groups, especially those from the voluntary and amateur sectors.

As a new cultural sector grows in the centre of old Runcorn, bringing theatre, library and creative partner

organisations closer together, plans for a cultural quarter in Widnes will be considered. Using the stoic Victorian architecture of the old Town Hall, the Kingsway buildings and St Paul's Church as physical markers, this area has huge potential as a cultural quarter, and a twin to the development planned in Runcorn.

Halton's children and young people represent the future of the borough. Through digital media, their connections with culture sit in their hands in a way previous generations could only have dreamt of. For them, providing real world experiences, 'hands-on' rather than 'hand-held', are key. Young people need physical stages, exhibition and performance spaces, volunteer and skills development opportunities and a voice to shape what happens in their own communities.

Working with education providers at all levels, from Early Years through to college level, this will be a clear priority: the crucible of culture starts in the formative years and becomes a lifelong engagement.

“As cultural sector sustainability grows, so too will that of the wider economy. Culturally richer and financially richer.”



Accountability

The success of the vision relies on a transformation in the way in which culture is both perceived and delivered in the borough. This vision establishes culture as an enabler of positive change. Halton Borough Council will provide the impetus for this change, working with an already engaged and active sector.

The crucible of culture relies on the Four Elements of Culture being supported and adopted by all who are invested in this vision. When the Four Elements are brought together, the opportunities to secure meaningful levels of funding (the Agent of Change) increase greatly.

Accountability to deliver on this ambition sits firstly with Halton Borough Council, as owner of the vision and the driver of the aspirations laid out within this document. This is a partnership delivery model, so that accountability will also be carried by organisations such as Cultivate and HHP.

Halton Borough Council's intention to facilitate and drive cultural change and growth is underlined by its commitments, as defined here in The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton, which includes investment in a new Cultural Officer post and the ownership of the Borough's cultural Action Plan. The local authority also has a key enabling role to play in the realisation of the Agent of Change, Funding, for the Borough's vibrant and dynamic cultural sector.

In the wider cultural landscape of the borough, that accountability, that drive for excellence, dynamism and creativity also sits with the organisations which together form the crucible of culture, the venues, the organisations, the volunteer and amateur groups, the participants and the audiences. Groups and organisations are encouraged to use the Vision to support grant funding applications.

Acknowledgements

There is more information about Halton's cultural DNA at visithalton.co.uk, the Visit Halton website. To be part of our ambition and find out more about the Crucible of Culture, visit cultivatehalton.co.uk, to discover the organisations which together form part of Halton's cultural forum, Cultivate.

To share your own experiences and photographs of Halton's cultural highlights as 'Culture Champions' on social media platforms, please use our hashtags #CrucibleOfCulture and #HaltonHighlights.

The Crucible of Culture: The Cultural Vision for Halton has been authored for Halton Borough Council, by Rob Sanderson-Thomas, Chief Executive of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, in conjunction with representatives of Halton's cultural sector and Halton Borough Council colleagues. The vision is owned by Halton Council. However, it is the culmination of consultations and workshops with the cultural sector, facilitated by Art Reach. The full document 'Halton Cultural Strategy Consultation Results' is available on the websites.



CRUCIBLE *noun*

A container in which substances may be subjected to very high temperatures, to bring about change. A place in which different elements can interact, leading to the creation of something new.

&

CULTURE *noun*

The collective expression of human creativity and imagination, shaped by the value and beliefs of a society, and reflected in its art, music, literature and other creative works.

Runcorn Town Deal – pictorial projects update
Board meeting Thursday 18 July 2024, Runcorn Town Hall

POWERED BY
LEVELLING
— UP —



**Funded by
UK Government**

Reconnecting
RUNCORN

Brindley Theatre Enhancement –



Brindley Theatre Enhancement –



High Street Connectivity – St Paul's Mews



High Street Connectivity – High Street public realm



Health and Education Hub -



Creative and Digital Skills Centre – 71 High Street



Creative and Digital Skills Centre – 57 59 and 63 65 High Street



Town Centre New Homes – High Street



High Street Connectivity – Temple New Hall Peace Garden



High Street Connectivity – Temple New Hall Peace Garden



Town Centre New Homes – Rutland Street area



High Street Connectivity – Street Art

BLOG

FAQ

CONTACT



Look at Life Vol 01 Transport New Roads for Old 1959



MORE VIDEOS



5:54 / 9:06

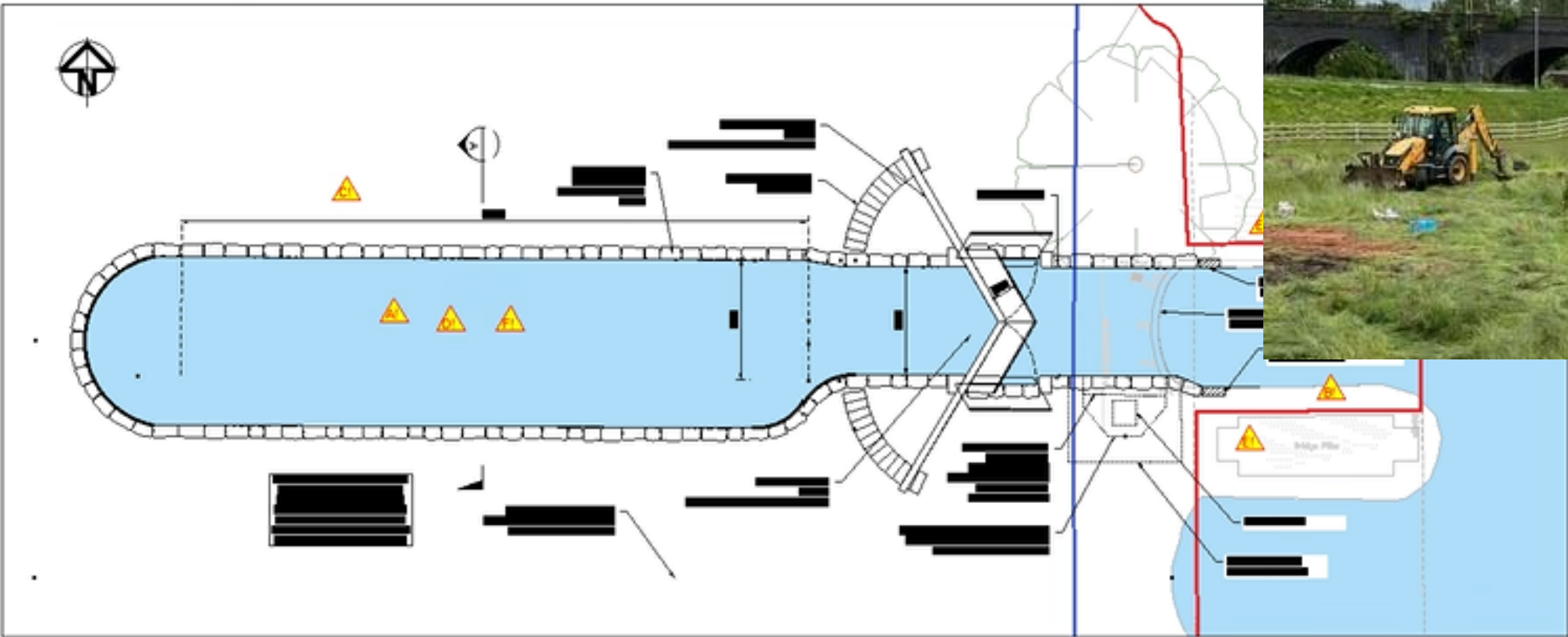


YouTube

<https://picturehalton.org.uk/>

Tim Stubbings Commercial Photography

Unlock Runcorn – civils, landscaping



General arrangement
1:100



Unlock Runcorn –
trip boat, visitor
café point, events
programme



Runcorn Station Quarter – Enterprise Facility



Programmes Office 23/24 Update Report

FACTS AND FIGURES

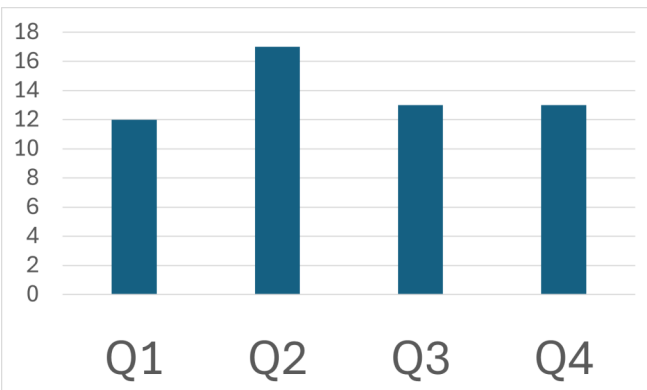
Total
enquiries:

55

Funding Bulletins

The Programmes Office (Formerly known as External Funding) produces a monthly Funding Bulletin, which provides a snapshot of grant funding available at that point in time. There are 7 sections: Strategic Funds & Council Significance (Borough-wide Significance); Youth, Schools & Colleges; Faith & Places of Worship; Health & Sport; Arts, Culture & Heritage and Miscellaneous.

Enquiries per Quarter



Annual Stats

Q1: £295,941

Q2: £291,000

Q4: £312,499

£899K

FUNDING SECURED

Projects Funded in 2023/2024

Catalyst SDC

£312,499

Arts Council England

LCRCA Runcorn

£291,000

Brownfield Land Release Fund 2

Open360

£192,071

National Lottery Community

St Berteline's PCC

£41,500

Various Funders

For further information contact: funding@halton.gov.uk or <http://www.halton.gov.uk/funding>

Programmes Office 23/24 Update Report

Project Supported in 23/24

Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Museum in Widnes, is delighted to announce that they have been awarded £312,499.00 from the MEND fund. This funding will be used to completely replace the flat roof of the fourth floor, glass-walled Observatory Gallery, a project that will be delivered in partnership with Halton Borough Council. Additional work to increase insulation at roof level will greatly improve the environmental performance of the museum.

Darren Henley, Arts Council England chief executive said: *'Museums make a huge contribution to the lives of people in towns and cities across England. The investment in the physical fabric of their buildings helps to make sure that our museums are able to carry on serving their communities for years to come. We're excited to be delivering the next round of the programme on behalf of the DCMS because we know the positive impact this investment has on helping museums make a real difference across the country'.*

Training Offer

BASIC BID WRITING TRAINING

Subjects covered in the course include: • Good bid-writing techniques • 10 key elements of a basic funding application • Top-tips to write a strong bid • Q&As

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As an introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation, this course will help you to understand what monitoring and evaluation will mean for your organisation and why it is so important. It is best suited to small to medium community organisations. Topics covered will include: monitoring - compliance with grant conditions and collection of evidence / data for all organisations (not just grant funded groups); and evaluation - understanding what the evidence tells you and how to present this in an evaluation report.

MANAGING YOUR GRANT

This course will offer a basic introduction to the responsibilities of managing grant funding for those of you who are new to this, or would like to improve your skills in this area. Topics covered will include: compliance with your grant conditions, basic financial management, understanding your claim process and collecting evidence for project monitoring.

Role of the Team

Funding Searches
Bid Writing & Supporting Documents
Training
Dissemination of Funding Information
Developing Partnerships
Lobbying Funders
Participation in Key Forums
Claims & Monitoring

Website/Social Media

Our website <http://www.halton.gov.uk/funding> you can find details on the team and the latest funding bulletins and access to online forms.

We are also now on twitter <https://twitter.com/fundinghalton> (@fundinghalton) which is updated with the latest funding opportunities and information.

Meet The 23/24 Team

Steph Davies — Programmes Office Manager

Sara Wilson — Senior Funding & Monitoring Officer

Jonathan Patten — Funding & Monitoring Officer

Melanie Dodd — Senior Funding & Development Officer

Steve Bretherton — Funding & Development Officer

Robbie Arrowsmith — Funding Support Assistant

Project Supported in 23/24

Open 360 is a non-profit organization working with all residents in Halton, Cheshire and Merseyside to provide training opportunities and employment assistance for all: Young People, Single Parents, Unemployed, Senior Citizens and Local Businesses.

With the assistance and expertise of the Programmes Office, Open 360 were able to secure £192,071 of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund in 23/24. This funding will allow them to offer the Connecting People and Communities with Digital Project.

The project helps tackle issues around digital inclusion by teaching people in the local community how to use a key-board, mouse, touchscreen, browse the internet safely and securely, correspond over e-mail and other digital basics.

This allows people to communicate over platforms such as Zoom, access online banking and shopping, order their repeat prescriptions and access Universal Credit facilities.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 3rd September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Widnes Market Update Report

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Widnes Market, following the implementation of the business plan, which was endorsed by Members in November 2022.

And also, to inform Members that as of the 3rd June 2024 there has been a change in the management structure at Widnes Market.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **Members note the change in the management structure at Widnes Market.**
- ii) **The report be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In November 2022, the Corporate Policy & Performance Board received a report and presentation on the Widnes Market Business Plan for review, following Executive Boards approval of the business plan at its meeting on 20th October 2022; the plan being subsequently endorsed by Policy & Performance Board Members at the meeting.
- 3.2 The Business Plan identified the priorities and actions to be undertaken by the Market Management team to ensure the market remained a successful trading environment into the future. The overarching vision for the market being to ensure that it remains a shopping destination at the heart of the town centre, where people want to shop and where there is a wide variety of quality products at competitive prices, and where traders can thrive and grow their businesses.
- 3.3 The main themes included in the business plan focussed on are summarised as follows: -

- 1. Improve the online and social media presence for the market in general,

and to help and support traders to improve their online presence.

2. To actively encourage a more diverse and unique range of products and services on offer by attracting new traders to the market
3. Continue to offer free public interest events to help promote the market to the public and to potential new traders alike.
4. To proactively promote the market as a shopping destination utilising a variety of media.
5. To ensure the market remains economically viable as a business model.

3.4 The above themes have all been progressed with improvements evident as follows: -

1. With the importance of online visibility and interaction with visitors, the online presence is growing, Facebook follower numbers have increased by over 15% (to almost 9,400) and Instagram followers increased by just over 60% (to just over 2,300 followers).

As part of a move towards adapting to a more tech-savvy society, the market staff actively encourage traders to start a Facebook business page and currently, over 50% of stallholders have done so; there is ongoing dialogue to encourage this to further increase.

A new free wi-fi has been installed at Widnes market, so visitors and traders can easily access the internet with the minimum of fuss. This also aids traders using wi-fi enabled card payment devices, ensuring a more streamlined card payment process for the customer.

2. The market has a diverse range of commodities on offer to the public from traditional food retailers such as, butchers, fruit and veg, fishmonger, bakery and cake stalls and oriental foods, there are also niche items where you can purchase carpets, curtains and blinds. There are many services on offer to help visitors to repair items, rather than replace, such as phone and laptop repairs, jewellery designers and repairs and shoe repairers.

Recently there has been some new traders commencing offering a wider range of commodities such as Spanish cleaning products, handmade reborn dolls and accessories, a custom framing business which showcases photos and keepsakes, and a fishing tackle stall on the outdoor market.

The food offer has been increased, and now along with the two traditional cafes and noodle bar, we now have a Greek food stall offering gyros and a coffee shop selling specialist Viennese coffee and cake. A new venture has also recently started which sells Italian foods with the option to take away ready-made meals, also selling homemade pizza, cooked on site, by the slice.

The market team have also supported the outdoor food retailer to expand his seating area and bring it under cover to help ensure his

customers can stay dry whilst enjoying the numerous food items on offer, from breakfast items, to burgers, jacket potatoes along with an offering of cream cakes for dessert.

3. Free market events have had a positive impact on visitor numbers. Events such as the Comic Con, the Christmas 2023 attractions programme throughout December and 'Markettfest' the mini music festival held on the outdoor market, all helped to draw in thousands of extra visitors. The 2023 Comic Con event in August 2023 had an overall footfall count of 47,955 visitors, the previous weekend the footfall count was 24,521, which is nearly double the number of visitors; this proves that events at Widnes market successfully attract additional visitors to Widnes and also to the wider town centre.

The newly created market public areas have assisted with the venue becoming a more publicly accessible space for promoting healthy living within the borough. As well as the established Halton health improvement stall (smoking cessation) there are more regular weekly bookings from health and wellbeing (blood pressure groups), man shed (weekly men's mental health group), sensory team (hearing and sight assistance), air ambulance, catalyst museum outreach, cancer support groups and connecting people and communities digital project.

4. Advertising events and the market has been conducted through a several communication mechanisms, including local press advertising (Liverpool Echo, Runcorn and Widnes Weekly News, St Helens Star and The Warrington Guardian).

Digital display screens have been installed in the main entrance foyer which has given us a dynamic platform to promote not only the market facilities but also the wide variety of commodities and services within.

This year has also seen Widnes market become one of the main sponsors of Widnes Vikings, with the market logo now on both the home and away kits, stadium pitch hoarding, market branding on score updates through social media and stadium scoreboard. The other benefit of this agreement with the club is they have been promoting larger market events to the captive audience in pre-match and half-time crowds.

Overall, we have now started to move away from press, radio, and TV advertising due to the cost, reduced readership, listeners, viewers reached, and the increasing lack of engagement with these formats from the general public.

The market team are currently exploring other means of advertising for the upcoming significant occasion, celebrating 150 years of Widnes market and 30 years of Widnes market at Bradley Way in the town centre to facilitate as wide reach as possible.

5. Widnes market continues to be economically viable and brings in much needed funds into the Council. The market has a high trader occupancy rate, which is currently at 89%, (indoor) this is in an economy where many local markets are suffering from reduced trader numbers, and the national average of local market occupancy rates are at 72% (in accordance with the 2023 survey from NABMA).

3.5 Change in Management Structure

Widnes market previously sat within the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department, and was managed by Property Services, with Catherine Haworth having strategic management responsibilities, and John Hughes as Divisional Manager for Operations.

- 3.6 As of the 3rd of June 2024, Widnes Market transferred to the Communities & Greenspace Department, and is now managed directly by the Stadium & Catering Services team. Strategic management responsibility is with Bruce Reardon, as Stadium Service Manager, and Lee Coombes as Head of Service for Stadium & Catering Services.

- 3.7 Widnes market contributes significantly to the economy and town centre, and this move is an opportunity for two separate services within the Council to work more closely together, and where possible pool resources to work on projects at both the Stadium and Widnes market.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant policy implications arising from the above

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The market provides an accessible welcoming space and has a changing places facility, a nursing room and quiet space, a multi-faith prayer room and water filling stations all of which support inclusive and accessible use.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The market is a key asset in Widnes town centre demonstrated by the age of the provision; it supports footfall to Widnes economy and provides a vibrant asset for residents and visitors.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The market is an open access universal asset. Events and targeted activities support an offer for younger residents.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The combination of the range of retail, services and support offers across the stall provision contributes to accessibility to produce, activity and services that positively impact health & wellbeing of residents and visitors.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Market visitors can refill water bottles free of charge. This contributes to reducing carbon footprint and the amount of plastic making its way into oceans and landfill. There is also an electrical vehicle charging point for Traders.

More broadly, as the Council manages the market the service is governed by the Council's climate change action plan; the market lighting has been replaced by LED's and there is currently a project assessing feasibility for solar panels on the roof.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The market provides a safe, managed retail space for residents and visitors which contributes to supporting a vibrant and resilient community in Halton.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks identified.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The market is fully accessible and is equipped with a changing places facility and multi-faith prayer space to support accessible, faith and cultural needs.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None under the meaning of the act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 3rd September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: School Meals Service – Service Closure

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the current status regarding the cessation of the school meals service provided by Halton Borough Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- 1) The current position regarding the withdrawal from the provision of school meals be noted.
- 2) The actions required to achieve the deadline of 31 March 2025 be noted

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 BACKGROUND

The decision to cease the provision of the school meals service was agreed in February 2023. The decision was to allow up to two financial years for schools to either procure an alternative catering provider or bring the service in house. The deadline for all schools was set at 31 March 2025.

- 3.2 The Director for Community & Greenspace briefed all school meals service employees which included representatives from Halton Borough Council Employee Relations, Unison and GMB on 15th February 2023.

- 3.3 Two catering providers expressed an interest in approaching Halton schools regarding their catering services early April 2024. The school meals management invited all schools effected to two open days consisting of a presentation, sample meals and an open question and answer forum with the two providers.

- 3.4 A Department of Education (DofE) training session was offered to

all existing schools, both online and in person which was facilitated by Wade Deacon. The DfE has a department that deals specifically in the procurement of non-teaching expenditure; they offered to assist all Halton schools with a free catering procurement package. To date, several schools have engaged with the DfE and utilised this offer.

3.5 **CURRENT POSITON**

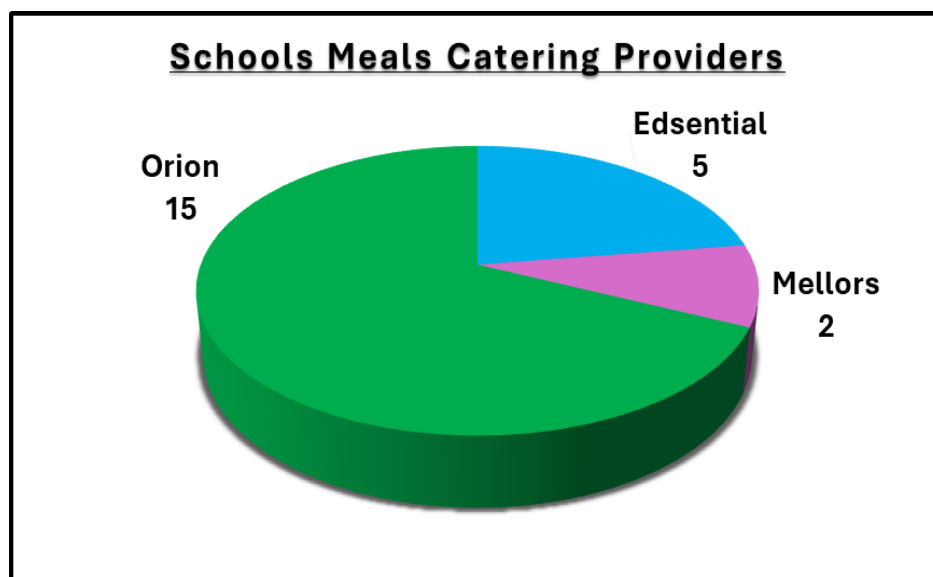
The number of schools that have transferred arrangements to date is lower than anticipated. The Council's school meals service continues to provide catering to 27 of the 47 schools that started the process on the 1 April 2023, this equates to 55% of the total schools.

3.6 A further 14 schools have given notice to terminate or with provisional leave dates of before 1 January 2025.

3.7 This will leave 13 schools to confirm new catering arrangements by 31st March 2025.

3.8 Those that have progressed alternative arrangements have engaged three different providers current analysis of catering providers is: -

- Orian Solutions (15)
- Edsential Catering Services (5)
- Mellors Catering Solutions (2)



3.9 The above chart includes two of those at notice of leaving position who have advised of their provider, further reports will provide clarification on providers for all schools.

3.10 ACTIONS REQUIRED

The 13 schools that have not confirmed their new catering provider, or termination date will be actively engaged from school return in September 2024 by the school meals management team to establish their approaches and timescales with ongoing input from the team to achieve the transfer date.

3.11 The Director of Community and Greenspace will be briefed regularly on their progress.

3.12 Any school that has not provided a transfer date by 1 October 2024 will receive a termination letter from Halton Borough Council, effective from 31 March 2025.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no significant policy implications arising from the above.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The school meals service currently operates at a £500k deficit budget, failure to terminate the service by 31 March 2025 would result in a percentage of this burden moving into future financial years.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The school meal service offer promotes healthy nutritional choices from a young age to support self-decision making, self-responsibility and independence.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The cessation of this being provided as a direct Council service has brought alternative providers into Halton and wider offers such as holiday activities had developed with some of the providers.

The service also provides local employment opportunities, the workforce are protected by TUPE transfer arrangements with new providers.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The school meals service impacts children's nutrition: the schools are well placed to work directly with providers to ensure an appropriate menu offer responding to their pupil needs.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

All children in Reception Class, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to receive a free school meal. Under the universal free school meal entitlement, parents and carers are encouraged to apply for free school meals as each child

eligible for a free school meal based upon parental income attracts a “Pupil Premium” for the school which is provided by Central Government providing funding to the schools.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The service has a long-established approach around reducing and managing food wastage which contributes to the Council's climate change approach.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The provision is essential to schools and their pupils, Halton's young residents. The nutritional value and food offer directly impacts health and wellbeing outcomes for pupils into the longer term.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There is managed risk, Management are supporting the schools to ensure all remaining schools have their arrangements in place with new providers with staff transferred by the effective date

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The service is a universal offer and accommodates faith or cultural requirements.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 10.1 None under the meaning of the act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 3rd September 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Performance Management Reports for Quarter 1 of 2024/25

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the first quarter period to 30th June 2024.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2024-25 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:

- Finance
- Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
- ICT and Administrative Support
- Legal and Democracy
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
- Property Services

The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy & Performance Board:

- 1) Receive the first quarter performance management report;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 All Key Performance Indicators relate directly to the following Council's priorities:

- Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
- Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
- Supporting Children, Young People and Families
- Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
- Working Towards a Greener Future
- Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 At the time at which Annual Business Plans are developed Directorate Risk Registers are also refreshed and updated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

Corporate Services – Priority Based Monitoring Report Q1

Reporting Period: 1st April – 30th June 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the first quarter of 2024/25 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Financial Services
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.
- 1.4 Corporate Priorities



Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024 – 2029
Our Community, Our Priorities, Our Future

Plan on a Page



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1** Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council's business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 2.2** The Council's latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

3.0 Performance Overview

- 3.1** Key Performance Indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.
- 3.2** It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget.
- 3.3** Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.


Financial Management

Key Objectives / milestones


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS01	Higher proportion of council tax income due for the year to be collected compared to the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year	U	Collection rate to 30 June 2024 was 27.33% which is marginally lower than the rate of 27.41% at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for 2023/24. To 30 June 2024 £797,106 was collected in relation to old year debt.


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS02	Higher proportion of business rates income due for the year to be collected compared to previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		Collection rate to 30 June 2024 was 32.57% which is 0.81% higher than the rate of 31.76% at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for 2023/24. To 30 June 2024 £778,454 was collected in relation to old year debt.

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 03	Reducing the average time for processing new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 21.65 days.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target Q1 20.83 days		On target.

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 04	Reducing the average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 8.55 days.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target Q1 13.70 days		The managed migration (commenced 2024/25) of housing benefit claimants to Universal Credit is causing significantly more notifications from the Department

		for Works and Pensions, reporting changes to Council Tax Reduction claimants' Universal Credit/income. The impact of this change has resulted in significantly more changes in circumstances to be processed, which is affecting processing times.
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Corporate Priority	Priority Two - Building a strong, sustainable, local economy
FS 05	Ensuring 90% of all suppliers' invoices are paid within 30 days, including those which are disputed invoices.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the proportion of suppliers' invoices paid within 30 days will be assessed Q1 92.28%		On target



Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS 06	Higher proportion of historic sundry debt to be collected compared to the same point the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the collection rate for the total outstanding historic debt (balance as at the previous year-end) will be compared to the same point the previous year		Total outstanding historic debt stood at £17,460,981 as at 31 March 2024. By 30 June 2024, 38.38% of this debt had been collected. The collection rate for historic debt was 37.85% at the same point last year.


Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

Key Objectives / milestones


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 01	Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council - Review and amend policy to focus on attendance, train and empower managers to apply procedure timely.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
23/24 – 11.46 – data showing on		Data is actually 15.5 without schools not 11.46
24/25 -12.5 FTE days average lost		Q1 - 2.65
25/26 - 10 FTE days average per person (public sector average)	*	. N/A
26/27 –7.8 FTE days average lost (national average)	*	N/A



Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 02	Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation - Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become an Employer of choice.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become an Employer of choice. 24/25 – turnover 13% stability 88%		Turnover: 15.29% Workforce Stability: 87.12% Slightly down on target for Q1,

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 03	Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
24/25 – 11m		£3,397,163.09
25/26 – 10m	*	N/A
26/27 – 9m – not noted in delivery plan	*	N/A

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 04	To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement 23/24 – 78% -current 24/25 – 13.5% 25/26 – 12% 26/27 – 10.0%		23/24 – 78% -current Quarter 1 14 %
To increase the number of post filled 1st time 23/24 – 78% -current 24/25 – 80% 25/26 – 83% 26/27 – 88%		23/24 – 78% -current Current 90 %


Strategic Outcomes

STRATEGIC ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council	15.26 days average per person	12.5 FTE days average lost	26/27 –7.8 FTE days average lost (national average)		
Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation	23/24 – turnover 14.9% stability 87.3%	24/25 – turnover 13% stability 88%	26/27 – turnover 10% stability 90%		
Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation	23/24 14m	24/25 – 11m	26/27 – 9m		
To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement	To increase the number of post filled 1st time 23/24 – 78% To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement 23/24 – 15%	24/25 – 80% 24/25 – 13.5%			


ICT

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 01	LD1 Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems 24/7 - 365.


Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
2023 saw the delivery of the initial Microsoft M365 E5 platform – 2024 continues to deliver updates with key technical partners.		The delivery of M365 has been a colossal undertaking, delivering a step change in the way the authority delivers technology to the end user. This undertaking has also crossed over the Customer Journey Transformation project delivering positive change to the end user experience linked to this change over to the Microsoft cloud. The project carries a number of dependencies to complete certain phases of the delivery. The switch from Microsoft Skype to a full Teams telephony implementation again is linked to the Customer Journey Transformation programme of work, one aspect is the delivery of a new contact centre solution – the current solution operates using the old technologies associated with Skype and is the final piece in the jigsaw for the full removal of this old system that has served the authority for the last 15 years. As detailed within ICT03 a project is in place to complete this process. Once this aspect of the M365 programme is complete the programme will start to focus upon the user experience as the new Laptop rollout will be able to complete removing the last 440 users from the VMware Desktop environment with the objective for completion of both projects 3 rd early 4 th quarter 2024/25.

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 02	LD2 Security Incidents across each reporting quarter

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The software packages and monitoring solutions will be in place by the 3 rd quarter 2024. Work is underway with Emergency planning in terms of communicating the implication of loss and the need for business based resilience plans.		<p>Across the previous Q4 and Q1 of this year extensive analysis and negotiations took place across a number of suppliers of what is known as MDR – Managed Detection Response, this in base terms covers the Cyber Security stance for the authority. This is essentially a remote 24/7 x 365 managed solution that covers Cyber:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat Detection • Threat Hunting • Response and Remediation • Incident response • Data Location Monitoring • Service Level Management • Managed Risk Services • Security Awareness training • PEN Testing and attack simulation management <p>Within HBC our technology assets and our data assets live in an ever changing world where the opportunity for criminal activity is increasing on a daily basis. In reality at a rate that is starting to become a major threat to the operation and sustainability of not just the authority. We are now at the mercy of many attack vectors from individuals and criminal gangs through to foreign government backed agencies. This is a world-wide issue that is hitting our news feeds and TV screens constantly with prominent attacks across a number of London hospitals recently causing millions of pounds worth of issues and disruption as business's are not able to operate without access to technology anymore.</p>


		<p>Many of our employees born in the early 90's may have never experienced a workplace without technology.</p> <p>As an organisation we closely follow NCSC and DHLUC cyber security frameworks and guidelines together with being an early adopter of the Government led Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF). It must be noted that purchasing this contract is not a magic pill and that we would never be subject to any attack but this will considerably mitigate the potential for attack and improve our security stance. A contract was awarded within Q2 covering a five year fixed fee contractual period. Work is now underway to implement the solution with the new provider over Q2.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 03	LD3 Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the delivered process and the number of contacts will be reported with an objective of delivering contact through all digital means, reducing wait times and improving resolution at 1 st contact for those services that will allow.		<p>27'945 individual call contacts across Quarter 1</p> <p>As noted within ICT01 a project has been underway to remove the ageing Contact Centre System with a modern highly functional cloud based telephony solution that has the ability to connect to a cloud based CRM solution as well as the authorities in house platform for CRM.</p> <p>Again this is a considerable undertaking as the call volumes into the authority are high and the delivery of the data platform supporting such a high volume solution has to be developed.</p>

		<p>The current CRM solution holds in excess of 20 years' worth of customer data this is again linked to over 1'100 individual service delivery options. Both the Telephony solution and the CRM have to evolve to enable new ways of working that will include Ai driven IVR queueing, Chat Bots and many other innovative solutions we now come to expect when we use the Web, Call Centre and Self Help solutions open to us in this technology driven environment. We cannot forget all of these services run on extensive and complex data sets many of which have been built over many years servicing the needs of often complex client requirements. The Changes to the Telephony and CRM systems are one of the most prominent features of the authorities interaction with the vast majority of our clients. As such the need to get this right first time is essential. Quarter 2 will bring with it set of completed contracts for both CRM and Telephony with a delivery objective within Quarter 3 of approximately 12 weeks.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
ICT 04	LD4 Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
The partnerships within the shop's continue to increase at a pace and a programme of work linked to the Transformation programme owned by the department. This is currently under development to increase the levels of services available and looking to partner with key external agencies.		<p>20'021 individual face to face interactions across Quarter 1.</p> <p>The Customer Journey transformation strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the full customer journey using personalised web portals, chatbots, mobile technologies, social media integration, and the latest AI and chat technologies. The</p>


		<p>goal is to seamlessly link the authority's contact centre and shop's with these technologies. Improving both face-to-face and digital customer experiences while ensuring accessibility for all, including those with limited access to technology. This strategy will also integrate with existing CRM and Office 365 technologies to improve internal and external client interactions from contact to resolution.</p> <p>Enhance Face-to-Face Customer Experience objectives Q1 – Q4:</p> <p>Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Check-In: Customers can check in for appointments or services via kiosks or mobile apps. • Integrated Systems: Use AI to enhance face-to-face interactions by providing staff with customer insights. • Feedback Systems: Digital kiosks or mobile apps for real-time feedback during face-to-face interactions. <p>Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRM Integration: Update customer records with face-to-face interaction details. • Office 365 Integration: Enable staff to access relevant documents and collaboration tools during interactions. <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalised Service: Staff can provide more personalised assistance. • Real-Time Feedback: Immediate understanding of customer satisfaction and areas for improvement. <p>This will also be linked to potential partnerships with NHS led Halton Health Hubs</p> <p>Discussions are in place to evaluate the options and also to offer an NHS presence within the HBC locations.</p>
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		Management are discussing options to increase the number of council services within the locations bringing services into the community on a face to face basis. Not all interaction can be digital.
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Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Revised Constitution to be approved by Annual Council each May		The revised Constitution was approved by Council in May


Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Inductions to be completed by June following election and offer of MAPs to be monitored on a quarterly basis		All inductions were completed by the end of May and MAP meetings have been offered to all members.

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 03	Ensure that prosecutions are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to issue from receipt of full instructions. The target is within 10 working days.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target		The target has been met.




Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 04	Ensure that care cases are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department. The target is within 3 working days

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target		The target has been met.




Catering & Registration Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Registrars
ERD 34	Provide accessible and efficient Registration Service to Halton residents.

Milestone: Quarterly updates on progress and annual performance data statistics to be reported to the relevant PPB	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Births (or declarations) within 5 working days of request		Halton has achieved 100%, the national average is 95%
Deaths (or declarations) within 2 working days of request		Halton 98.67%, the national standard is 95%
Waiting times - % of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time.		98.09% versus 90% Average. The service has full staff resource and are also multi trained in register duties which enables Halton's high achievement with this indicator.





Strategic Outcomes

Appointment Type	Total Number	Number outside of timeframe	Halton %	Progress Q1	Comments
Births (or declarations) within 5 working days of request	6	0	100%		100% within requested time National average 95%
Deaths (or declarations) within 2 working days of request	150	2	98.67%		Contact from Informant on Friday / Bank Holiday National average 95%
Waiting Times – % of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time	314	6	98.09%		The service has full staffing resource and are also multi-trained in registrar duties which enables Halton's high achievement with this indicator National average 95%




Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 11	Rationalise the Council's main office accommodation to deliver revenue savings.

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Exec Board approval to vacate the Municipal Building and progress with associated works – June 24.		Informal report presented prior to Exec Board in June but no decisions made regarding vacating the Municipal Building. Exec Board requested further information be presented on the various options. Target date to report back to the September meeting.
Agreement to revised officer to desk ratio – September 24		The revised officer to desk ratio of 2 to 1 was discussed with Exec Board Members in June, no decision was made, further information will be presented in quarter 2.
Complete options appraisal for Widnes office to present to members by March 25		Proposals on various options to be presented to Executive Board Members, in quarter 2.
Agreed approach to provision of HBC staff accommodation by March 25		Subject to the above, it is hoped that a decision will be made by March 2025 with regards the accommodation for HBC staff.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 12	Reduce Carbon Emissions from the Council's Property Portfolio

Milestone	Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
Deliver the leisure centre by Feb 3 rd , 2025.		The Leisure Centre is currently on programme for delivery by the contractual completion date of the 3rd of February 2025.
Commence works on site at St Pat's & St Luke's by December 2024.		Eric Wright Partnerships are currently updating the design information and will be providing updated estimated costs in due course. The intension is that a report will be presented to Exec Board in September outlining the most appropriate way to proceed. A procurement process will then be undertaken to allow a contractor to be appointed, therefore it may be into the new year before a start on site occurs, subject to budget approval.
Ensure year on year reduction in carbon emissions from the Council's property portfolio. Baseline at 31 st March 2023 - 6096 tonnes. target 3% after year 1, 5% reduction after year 3.		Carbon emissions for the year 2023-24 from the Council's buildings (Corporate buildings & schools) have amounted to 5593 tonnes carbon which equates to just over an 8% reduction from the previous year.

4.0 Financial Statements

*Note all financial projections contained within this report are based on actual through to 31 July rather than the usual 30 June for the Q1 position.

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,945	2,315	2,197	118	100
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	22	(22)	(124)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Insurances	986	295	296	(1)	(5)
Supplies & Services	410	253	291	(38)	(117)
Rent Allowances	35,500	10,622	10,622	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	0	2	(2)	(127)
LCR Levy	1,748	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	(145)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	17	6	(1)
Discretionary Social Fund	106	35	0	35	90
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	100	70	30	94
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,480	763	763	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,370	14,406	14,280	126	(235)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-335	-87	-96	9	28
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-78	18	18
Dedicated schools Grant	-144	-4	0	(4)	(13)
Council Tax Liability Order	-581	-341	-366	25	76
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-312	-312	-307	(5)	(7)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,748	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-153	-157	4	14
Rent Allowances	-34,700	-8,726	-8,685	(41)	(123)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-23	-25	2	1
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-100	-93	(7)	(21)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-498	-166	-163	(3)	(9)
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-12	12	12
Universal Credits	-5	-2	0	(2)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,480	-729	-729	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	-5	5	5
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-87	-79	-85	6	(20)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-151	-28	-47	19	53
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	0	7
Total Income	-42,028	-10,810	-10,848	38	16
Net Operational Expenditure	8,342	3,596	3,432	164	(219)
Recharges					
Premises Support	377	126	126	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,365	788	788	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-6,053	-2,018	-2,018	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,311	-1,104	-1,104	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,031	2,492	2,328	164	(219)

Comments on the above figures



The forecast outturn for the year as at 31 July 2024 is for the department net spend position to be £0.219m over the approved budget.


In previous years there has been a notable underspend against the Concessionary Travel budget, however this is forecasted to end as operations begin to revert back to usual procedures following several years of Covid adjusted reimbursements to the operators. New rates have been calculated by the bus operators following the termination of the Covid support, and the updated expenditure forecast reflects this. An overspend of £0.127m above the approved budget profile is forecast by the end of the financial year.

Despite an increase in budget in 2024/25 Rent Allowances continue to be an area of concern, due to the increased costs of supported accommodation, the expenditure budget is higher than the income budget. This should ideally net to zero, however, Housing Benefit will only fund supported accommodation up to a nominal figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to fund. The outturn figure has reduced from prior years due to the increased budget uplift, however it is still forecasted to have a significant impact on the department's overall outturn.

Within Supplies and Services, there is a £0.127m overspend, £0.45m is due to the business rates team engaging with Inform CPI who specialise in identifying new business rate premises that have not been included within the rating list. Whilst there is no budget for this expenditure, the exercise has generated £0.240m in additional business rates income which should sit against the Collection Fund account next year.

Approved 2024/25 Savings**FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	50		No official changes made yet
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	25	0		On track

F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40		On track
Total Finance Department				65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit**Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,283	1,094	1,061	33	110
Employees Training	117	53	40	13	39
Apprenticeship Levy	300	68	105	(37)	(113)
Supplies & Services	395	67	77	(10)	(30)
Total Expenditure	4,095	1,282	1,283	-1	6
Income					
Fees & Charges	-223	-29	-35	6	17
Schools SLA Income	-565	-517	-509	(8)	(22)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-5	5	5
Total Income	-788	-546	-549	3	0
Net Operational Expenditure	3,307	736	734	2	6
Recharges					
Premises Support	174	58	58	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,209	403	403	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,573	-1,191	-1,191	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,137	-730	-730	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,170	6	4	2	6

Comments on the above figures

Currently the Chief Executive Delivery Unit Department (CXDU) is projecting an outturn position under the approved budget profile by £0.006m. The largest contributing factor to the underspend is in relation to employee expenditure, the service contains a number of vacancies.

The underspend generated by the vacancies is expected to be offset by an overspend against the approved budget profile in relation to the apprenticeship levy.

The Apprenticeship Levy is a small tax levied to fund new apprenticeships. It means that all UK businesses with an annual wage bill of more than £3m must pay ½ a per cent of their gross payroll to HMRC. As wages have increased and will continue to do so, the amount paid to HMRC will also increase and will remain a budget pressure going forwards.

ICT and Administration Department**Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,596	1,922	1,817	105	318
Supplies & Services	921	464	610	(146)	(437)
Capital Finance	100	33	4	29	62
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,576	1,674	(98)	(268)
Communication Costs	13	0	41	(41)	(142)
Premises	159	61	59	2	7
Transport	3	1	0	1	1
Total Expenditure	8,516	4,057	4,205	-148	-459
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,056	-489	-489	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-646	-502	-483	(19)	(59)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	0	-13	-20	7	(19)
Transfer from Reserves	-148	-148	-148	0	448
Total Income	-1,850	-1,152	-1,140	(12)	370
Net Operational Expenditure	6,666	2,905	3,065	(160)	(89)
Recharges					
Premises Support	550	183	183	0	0
Transport Support	19	6	7	(1)	0
Central Support	2,380	793	793	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-8,831	-2,944	-2,944	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,388	-1,962	-1,961	(1)	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,278	943	1,104	(161)	(89)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of the 2024/25 financial year it is forecasted that the ICT and Administration Department will be over the approved budget profile by £0.089m.

In previous years, a significant budget pressure for the department has been the administrative staff. Now that the service has been disaggregated the burden is no longer pooled within the department but across the Council.

The main pressures faced by the ICT and Administration Department is now in relation to the IT infrastructure, with the move to Microsoft 365, staff have been able to utilise much more efficient hardware. However, the software utilised by the new hardware is at a premium and will be a continuous pressure the Council will need to react to as prices fluctuate.

With a number of agency staff across the Council, ICT and Administrative Services are recharging licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments as the costs are not held within the initial contracts with suppliers such as Microsoft, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact their agency staff are having on the Council's finances as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

There has been a substantial increase in postage costs, impacting the communications budget, which is forecast to overspend against the annual budget by £0.142m.

SLA income will be reduced as schools are withdrawing from Halton BC and using a different provider

Legal and Democratic Services Department**Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2024**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,511	683	674	9	28
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	353	(353)	(632)
Supplies & Services	368	155	261	(106)	(4)
Civic Catering & Functions	23	8	2	6	12
Legal Expenses	218	19	19	0	(278)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	4	0	4	7
Other Expenditure	0	0	3	(3)	(3)
Total Expenditure	2,131	869	1,312	(443)	(870)
Income					
Land Charges	0	0	-29	29	85
School SLA's	-98	-84	-77	(7)	(20)
Licence Income	-301	-100	-79	(21)	(46)
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-171	-171	-171	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-74	-29	-14	(15)	(34)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-27	27	27
Total Income	-686	-426	-439	13	12
Net Operational Expenditure	1,445	443	873	(430)	(858)
Recharges					
Premises Support	53	18	18	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	275	92	92	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-2,391	-797	-797	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,063	-687	-687	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-618	-244	186	(430)	(858)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of July 2024 the department is reporting a net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.858m at the end of the financial year.

Employee costs for the year are expected to marginally be below the approved budget (including staff payments for recent elections). This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but due to the demand on the service, agency staff are required to maintain the service. The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.632m at the end of the financial year. Although these are agreed to be funded from reserves, due to the Council's current level of reserve balances it is increasingly important to develop alternative options to maintain the service levels.

Within the forecast £0.278m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.470m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, as well as alternatives to agency staff such as market supplements, should help drive down the overspend in the department

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Environment & Regeneration
Revenue Budget as at 31st July 2024

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,358	3,700	3,457	243	1,146
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	66	(66)	(262)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	50	(50)	(101)
Premises	3,521	1,070	1,089	(19)	(71)
Supplies & Services	1,585	380	401	(21)	(80)
Hired & Contracted Services	510	83	83	0	0
Book Fund	128	53	53	0	0
Food Provision	388	115	108	7	36
School Meals Food	2,083	320	332	(12)	(42)
Transport	117	10	11	(1)	(9)
Agency Costs	441	100	148	(48)	(94)
Other Expenditure	0	0	41	(41)	(50)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	0	0	0	255
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	16	12	4	35
Grant to Norton Priory	172	29	87	(58)	0
Total Expenditure	33,369	5,876	5,938	(62)	763
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-422	-422	0	(118)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,470	-1,952	-1,942	(10)	(50)
Rental Income	-235	-39	-71	32	26
Markets Income	-910	-152	-208	56	(79)
Government Grant Income	-643	-482	-482	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-467	-467	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-219	-250	31	(10)
School Meals Income	-3,598	-600	-562	(38)	(213)
Internal Fees Income	-286	-48	-15	(33)	61
Capital Salaries	-173	-29	-14	(15)	(5)
Transfers from Reserves	-14	-14	-14	0	0
Total Income	-14,718	-4,424	-4,447	23	(388)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,651	1,452	1,491	(39)	375
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	279	279	0	0
Transport	2,257	376	214	162	(51)
Central Support	3,592	599	599	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	33	33	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-843	-141	-141	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	1,146	984	162	(51)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,531	2,598	2,475	123	324

Comments on the above figures

The net Departmental Expenditure is forecast to be £0.324m under budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Spend on employees is forecasted to be £1.146m under the annual budget. A restructure is taking place within the Community Safety, Leisure and within the Stadium and Catering Division, in order to facilitate these restructures, posts have been held vacant on a temporary basis, leading to a reduction in costs.

There have also been difficulties recruiting to certain roles due to a lack of qualified applicants, which has led to some posts being vacant for longer than planned. The figure is offset from an expected agency spend of £0.363m.

Spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.071m over the approved budget in 2024/25, the new leisure centre is now expected to hand over within this financial year and will begin to incur costs within 24/25. The original plans were for the leisure centre to utilise the solar farm however the extension required to provide energy to the leisure centre has only recently been submitted for planning, so there is a potential budget pressure next year as the energy will have to be provided elsewhere until the solar farm extension is functioning.

Supplies and Services is showing a forecast overspend of £0.080m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years

Waste Disposal Contract costs are forecasted to achieve £0.255m under the approved budget during 2024/25. Costs are likely to increase slightly from 2023/24, however invoices are not received until later in the financial year so it is difficult to fully indicate what the outturn position will be at this stage.

Sales, Fees & Charges, and Markets Income are expected to be below the income target within 2024/25, these are offset against reductions in forecasted expenditure for the year in particular the staffing costs, as the staff are not in place to generate the income, however the full impact of changes of this nature will be realised following the cessation of the School Meals service as this budget pressure absorbs any underspend generated.

Budget Savings

Catering Stadium & Registration Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		✓ Restructure is currently underway
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		✓ The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Environment Department				36	12		

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT**Revenue Operational Budget at 31 July 2024**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,342	1,812	1,709	103	308
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	102	(102)	(305)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Repairs & Maintenance	1,689	700	741	(41)	(117)
Premises	146	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,221	281	267	14	62
NNDR	659	633	623	10	10
Rents	163	0	0	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	173	172	1	4
Supplies & Services	482	119	106	13	40
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,074	169	169	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	44	44	0	0
Capital Finance	0		0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	165	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	10,573	4,050	4,052	(2)	2
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-721	-346	-361	15	46
Rent - Commercial Properties	-871	-196	-196	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-14	-14	0	0
Government Grant	-1,531	-753	-753	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-306	-172	-170	(2)	(6)
Schools SLA Income	-234	-209	-192	(17)	(17)
Recharges to Capital	-348	-163	-163	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-393	-384	-384	0	0
Total Income	-4,442	-2,237	-2,233	(4)	23
Net Operational Expenditure	6,131	1,813	1,819	(6)	25
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	691	691	0	0
Transport	30	10	10	0	0
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,927	-2,642	-2,642	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-1,292	-1,292	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,259	521	527	(6)	25

Comments on the above figures

Finance communicates with the department on a regular basis to manage and analyse spending, identifying potential savings that could support current and future priorities. In an era of constrained budgets, achieving these goals is essential. The above report forecasts that the department will be under budget by £0.025m at year-end.

Supporting Information

The department consists of 139fte, of which 69fte are externally funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.126m. The employee figures in this report incorporate the projected pay award for 24/25.

Through diligent account monitoring, the success of utilising grant and external funding to alleviate pressure on the core budget is evident in employee expenses. Specific projects have been identified, and staff time has been allocated accordingly. Ensuring at all times that we are compliance with the grant conditions. This approach will continue throughout the year.

To fulfil statutory and contractual obligations and support the borough's regeneration, maintaining a complete staff establishment is essential. However, the challenge of filling surveyor and project manager roles, even with a market supplement, has resulted in a lack of suitable candidates. Consequently, the engagement of agency personnel has been necessary, anticipated to cost £300,000 this financial year. Without these personnel, the borough's regeneration efforts would be hindered, potentially leading to a loss of business rates and council tax.

The recruitment of the agency staff has led to an increase in commercial rental income, as it has enabled the completion of pending rent reviews.

Managers have asked to identify and implement measures to reduce unnecessary spending, whilst also ensuring the needs of the service are met leading to the department's projecting a positive variance amounting to £0.040m within supplies and services.

A recent exercise was conducted to determine the costs associated with empty properties within the Borough. Consequently a new cost centre was established to monitor these expenses. In addition to the loss of rental income whilst the properties remain vacant, the Council incur additional costs for utilities, repairs, and maintenance. As of the end of July, the total costs related to these properties amount to £0.143m. To reduce the expenses actions need to be taken to accelerate the leasing or explore temporary uses for properties, such as short-term rentals or community projects, which will generate some income and reduce costs.

The Department highlighted the necessity of expert advice to advance regeneration projects. Additionally, the change in Government highlighted the need for an up-to-date Housing Strategy for the Borough. Following a meeting with the Director of Economy, Enterprise, and Property, it was decided to use the Department's reserves to cover these one-off costs. Seeking external advice will assist with future grant funding requests from the LCR and Government, and enable the department to fulfil its obligations regarding the borough's regeneration strategy.

Although the Council have seen a significant increase in energy costs over the last few years, it is anticipated that costs this financial year will be £0.163m lower than in 2023/24, representing a decrease of over 13%. The department is forecasting that it will be £0.062m under budget by year-end. Since contract prices are fixed until March 2025, projections are based on the 2023/24 usage using the unit price quoted by the supplier. However, if usage increases as more staff return to the office, these prices might rise.



The Repairs and Maintenance program is continually being reviewed to ensure it remains in budget. This financial year presents a challenge as no inflation adjustment was factored into the 2024/25 approved budget, and it was further reduced by 10%. It is projected that the expenditure will exceed the budget by £0.117m at the end of the year. This projection is based on the 2023/24 expenses and does not take into account the 6% inflation in general building materials over the past year, as reported by BCIS.

Additionally, the department has conducted an exercise to determine which expenditures are capital in nature, and these have now been reclassified within the capital program.

Similar to previous years, the school cleaning service's level agreement (SLA) is not meeting its financial targets due to the employment of agency for covering absences and leave, as well as the anticipated pay award. A reassessment of the SLA charges is in progress in preparation for the forthcoming budget year. Additionally, the demand for the service is declining as more schools transition to Academies.

Approved 2024/25 Savings




Please see for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	100	0		A review of the cleaning service is underway with some positions removed from the structure. The full savings will not be achieved until the accommodation review is complete.
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	52	0		Following advice from HR the restructure will not take place until the final quarter of the year.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				152	0		





5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u>.</i>
Amber 	Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved</i>
Red 	Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken</u>.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green 	Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber 	Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red 	Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A 	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.