



This is an open report

Report to: Confident Council Scrutiny Report

Date of Meeting: 11 November 2024

Subject: Events Team Review and Future Plan

Report of: James Winterbottom, Director – Strategy and Innovation

Contact Officer: Georgina Roby - Service Manager Culture and Events

Cabinet Portfolio Holder and area: Councillor Chris Ready, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Summary:

The report details what has been achieved by the Events Team to date and outlines our strategy from 2025/26 linked to the new Progress with Unity plan.

‘Progress with Unity’ Missions:

As residents, businesses, public services and community organisations of this borough we have come together to deliver two key missions:

- **Mission 1: Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents & businesses.**
“Together, we will break down the barriers that create financial, health, education and environmental inequalities in our borough.”
- **Mission 2: Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them.**
“Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our community best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive.”

These missions are supported by the council’s plan which has three key pillars: **community wealth and health building, a focus on inequalities and supporting communities to fulfil their potential and create opportunities for all.**

Outline how this report supports our ‘Progress with Unity’ missions:

Events Team supports Mission 1: Create fair opportunities for children, families, residents and businesses by:

- Supporting the delivery of an inclusive year-round events programme



- Improving the health and wellbeing of our residents
- Converting day visitors to staying visitors, improving the local economy.

Events Team supports Mission 2: Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish by:

- Increasing the vibrancy of our Town Centres
- Increasing the number of new day visitors
- Increasing the number of repeat day visitors
- Supporting the delivery of large-scale transformational projects.

Wards Affected:

All wards

Recommendation(s):

The Confident Council Scrutiny Committee is requested to:-

- (1) endorse the content of the report and feedback on progress to date;
- (2) feedback on the proposed events programme activity for 2025/26; and
- (3) support the progressing of Events Team plans going forward to 2030, linking to other key corporate strategies and plans of work.

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

The current plans to 2030 are supported with core Events Team budget. Income is forecasted and monitored to ensure delivery. One of the key aims for the Events Team is to capitalise on commercial activity that brings significant revenue in to offset event costs for core delivery.

To demonstrate return on investment, an annual estimated contribution to the wider economy is calculated,

Is budget release necessary (Capital Expenditure Only)?

No

What are the legal implications?

All funding and contract agreements are in place.

What are the staffing implications?

The current plans to 2030 are supported with core Events Team budget. Income is forecasted and monitored to ensure delivery.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment not required because activity is across all communities. Relevance Check is attached.



What are the property implications in terms of reduction, addition or change to the council's asset base or its occupation?

None

What are the Corporate Parenting Implications?

There will be opportunities for children and young people in our care to participate in events activity.

Risks:

Risks would only be relevant to non-delivery of the programme.

Sustainability/Environmental/Climate implications:

The work is supporting a sustainable events programme for Wigan Borough. Events and cultural projects will support our environmental objectives wherever possible, and will utilise the borough's green spaces, emphasising the wellbeing benefits of participation for our residents.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

The alternative option would be a different programme of activity for 2025/26.

There are no background papers for this report.

Directorate Sign-off:	Peter Hughes
Date:	18 October 2024



Summary

The Events Team is responsible for the delivery of corporate and commercial events. This report details what has been achieved by the team to date and outlines our strategy from 2025/26 linked to the new Progress with Unity plan. Our intention is to continue to:

Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish:

- Increase the vibrancy of our Town Centres
- Increase the number of new day visitors
- Increase the number of repeat day visitors
- Support the delivery of large-scale transformational projects.

Create fair opportunities for children, families, residents and businesses:

- Support the delivery of an inclusive year-round events programme
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our residents
- Convert day visitors to staying visitors, improving the local economy.

We will also support aspirations to develop the visitor economy and tie into key objectives with site developments at: Leigh Sports Village, Haigh Woodland Park, Pennington Flash, Wigan Pier and Town Centre redevelopments.

Both the Culture and Events Teams have outlined strategic priorities around creating Infrastructure, Capacity and Delivery to successfully achieve ambitions around the emerging visitor strategy, cultural manifesto 2025-30 and the corporate priorities as part of the New Era work.

In 2023/24 the Be Well events team, who focus primarily on activities within Robin Park and Leigh Leisure Centres, became part of the existing Events Team. An Events Marketing Officer was recruited to the team in November 2023 to support the regular promotion of Wigan Borough events and to increase sponsorship.

The Events Team delivered its first large-scale projects in 2022, hosting both the Women's Euros and Rugby League World Cup, bringing additional economic benefits of over £7M for the local economy.

To demonstrate return on investment, an annual estimated contribution to the wider economy is calculated, based on event attendees. These are:

- 2021/22 = £1.5M based on 69,000 event attendees.
- 2022/23 = £1.7M based on 73,000 event attendees (with additional visitors for the UEFA Women's EUROs events valued at £6M+ and Rugby League World Cup events £1M+).
- 2023/24 = £2M based on 89,000 event attendees.
- 2024/25 = On track to achieve £3.4M based on 149,000 event visits (including 50k Robin Park Concert attendees).

Other benefits of delivering the events programme include enhanced reputation, education, health and business/sector support.

2024 has been a year of consolidation of events within the programme and working practices across the team. The new structure aimed to create better functionality, to allow more events to be profitable. Wigan and Leigh Proms has made a profit for the first time and is the blueprint for doing this across other areas.

The events programme has continued to grow and support a wide range of activity. The team maintains a welcoming environment for local and national event organisers, highlighted with the success of the recent commercial gigs at Robin Park Arena ran by SJM Concerts, one of the largest promoters in the UK.

One of the key aims for the Events Team during 2025/26 is to capitalise on commercial activity that brings significant revenue in to offset event costs for core delivery.

Moving forward the Events Team will continue to deliver against the Council's broader ambitions as set out in A New Era - Progress with Unity by creating diverse, inclusive events and festivals that resonate with all members of the community.

The programme for 2025/26 will build on the success of the previous year whilst supporting the refreshed Cultural Manifesto 'The Fire Within - The Forge' and developing opportunities highlighted in the Creative Industries Asset Strategy. In turn, these events will attract visitors and investors enabling each town and neighbourhood to celebrate their identity whilst improving their health and wellbeing.

The Events Team is forging stronger links with Leigh Sports Village and will support the aspirations of the campus, working to attract and/or deliver large scale events to bring income into this council owned facility.

A business case was approved in 2024 with the Director of Strategy & Innovation and finance colleagues, to support events activity through to 2030.



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1.0 Introduction

The Events Team was formed in February 2020, further to a business case supporting the need to enhance and grow the offer for visitors and residents. The aim was to be at the forefront of transformational change, putting Wigan Borough on the map as a place that delivers high quality exciting events with something to offer everyone.

Events were identified as instrumental in supporting The Deal objectives of 'vibrant town centres for all' and 'embracing culture, sport and heritage', helping to deliver the ambitions of The Fire Within cultural manifesto, and strengthening a sense of pride in our local communities.

Town and district centres across the borough continue to face significant challenges due to the changing pace of the high street. Events have the potential to increase economic growth and diversification of usage. Culture, arts and tourism also introduce vibrancy and impact that can increase engagement and footfall and generate a sense of pride in the place.

The Events Team is responsible for the delivery of:

- **Corporate Events** - Events that may have commercial elements but are primarily delivered for other reasons such as wider economy, reputational, health and wellbeing, statutory requirements.
- **Commercial Events** - the primary return for the council is commercial and these events do generate the largest amount of income, they also often bring the same added benefits as the corporate programme.

Due to the global pandemic, the team were unable to deliver the events programme in 2020 and 2021, contributing instead to the emergency response across the borough and the work of the Health Protection Board, providing guidance around events and the use of public spaces.

The team were integral to the reopening of town centres and local communities as recovery plans were put into action.

During the pandemic there was further engagement with businesses and residents. It was found that events and cultural activities were seen as an integral way of supporting our social, economic and environmental aspiration as a borough. The Events Team spent focussed time on professionalising the event offer and supporting the private sector by creating an accommodating events environment.

The Events Team delivered its first large-scale projects in 2022, hosting both the Women's Euros and Rugby League World Cup, bringing additional economic benefits of over £7M for the local economy.



In 2023/24 the Be Well events team, who focus primarily on activities within Robin Park and Leigh Leisure Centres, became part of the existing Events Team. They have now started to deliver against wider borough priorities in line with the wider Culture and Events team. The team offer a commercial catering and hospitality service (including the operation of Café Life bar at Robin Park).

The events programme has continued to grow and support a wide range of activity. The team maintains a welcoming environment for local and national event organisers, highlighted with the success of the recent commercial gigs at Robin Park Arena ran by SJM Concerts, one of the largest promoters in the UK, attracting 50k attendees.

An Events Marketing Officer was recruited to the team in November 2023 to support the regular promotion of Wigan Borough events and to increase sponsorship. The officer also picks up strategic work around tourism strategy (Visit Wigan) and ticketing, utilising data to enable us to better commercialise the events offer.

A business case was approved in 2024 with the Director of Strategy & Innovation and finance colleagues, to support events activity through to 2030.

This report details what has been achieved to date and outlines our strategy from 2025/26 linked to the new Progress with Unity plan. Our intention is to continue to:

Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish:

- Increase the vibrancy of our Town Centres
- Increase the number of new day visitors
- Increase the number of repeat day visitors
- Support the delivery of large-scale transformational projects.

Create fair opportunities for children, families, residents and businesses:

- Support the delivery of an inclusive year-round events programme
- Improve the health and wellbeing of our residents
- Convert day visitors to staying visitors, improving the local economy.

We will also support aspirations to develop the visitor economy and tie into key objectives with site developments at: Leigh Sports Village, Haigh Woodland Park major transformation, Pennington Flash, regeneration of Wigan Pier and Town Centre redevelopments.

We are working closely with GMCA, and partners across the region, on project opportunities including the delivery of an events programme in Wigan Borough that will be part of Manchester International Festival in 2025.



1.1 Team Structure

The current structure of the team is:

- Business Manager x1 (Carmel Baines replacing John Herriott in Aug 2024)
- Event and Hospitality Manager x1
- Event Officer x 3
- Event Marketing Officer x 1
- Hospitality Supervisor x 1
- Admin Assistant x 1

There are a number of contracted casual staff that support event and hospitality delivery.

2.0 Strategic Priorities

There are a number of strategic priorities that the culture and events team have outlined to successfully deliver against the renewed ambitions of the emerging visitor strategy, the cultural manifesto 2025-30 and the corporate priorities as part of the New Era work, these include but are not limited to:

2.1 Infrastructure

To grow the event sector in the borough, we will need to ensure that existing organisations are resilient, especially in difficult circumstances such as those currently being faced. At the same time, we will need to plan for and create new infrastructure to support areas of identified future growth. In support of this, over the next five years we will:

- Continue to support and advise organisers how to make events safe and successful via the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
- Create a welcoming events environment to attract organisers to develop and deliver events in Wigan Borough.
- Support the successful delivery of the Haigh Hall project and subsequent operational programme.
- Support the ongoing development of sites such as Leigh Sports Village, Pennington Flash and Mesnes Park and subsequent operational programmes.
- Support the successful delivery of the Town Centre redevelopment projects in Wigan, Leigh and Ashton and subsequent operational programme.

2.2 Capacity

The continued success and growth of the events sector in the borough is reliant on increased opportunity and more equitable capacity being created, underpinned by



co-collaboration, shared purpose and investment. To support this over the next five years, we will:

- Support the ongoing development of the visitor strategy and associated objective:
 - Increase the number of new day visitors
 - Increase the number of repeat day visitors
 - Convert day visitors to staying visitors.
- Lead on the coordinated approach to marketing and promotion, encouraging complementary and coordinating work to achieve economic goals.
- To develop existing organisations, allowing them to better achieve their goals whilst contributing to the objectives of the wider strategic vision for Wigan Borough.
- Providing training, networking and guidance.
- Capture and advocate the impacts (economic/social/health/education) of events activities for the borough.

2.3 Delivery

Since the formation of the team, strong progress has been made to provide a robust and professional service, with the ability to deliver high quality in-house productions and to cohesively work with wider partners from the sector. There is still work to do and at the heart of this will be provision of high-quality programmes that are relevant and responsive to our residents' interests and needs.

Over the next five years, we will:

- Increase engagement with our core offer, ensuring it is inclusive and accessible by all.
- Support the delivery of partner programmes and private investment from the wider sector.
- Manage and facilitate a recurring annual programme of events and activities e.g. Light Night.
- Support the expansion of the visitor economy across the borough.
- Develop a long-term sustainability plan for events.

3.0 Programme Delivery

Due to the global pandemic, the team were unable to offer an events programme in 2020 and 2021, contributing instead to the emergency response across the borough and the work of the Health Protection Board, providing guidance around events and the use of public spaces.

Since the inception of the Cultural Manifesto, over 243,674 residents participated in council-led arts events and activities with an additional full programme of civic and commercial events held annually.



From **April 2021 – March 2022** £370k of ‘Welcome Back’ external funding was utilised to reopen high streets and parks with a series of Our Town events. A Halloween-themed 10k night run was trialled at Haigh Woodland Park for hundreds of participants and Wigan PRIDE went ahead in the town centre with added precautions and restrictions, building confidence in reopening our town centre.

The estimated contribution to our wider economy based on 69,000 event attendees was £1,587,000. Other benefits include enhanced reputation, education, health and business/sector support.

From April 2022 - March 2023 - The estimated contribution to our wider economy based on 73,000 event attendees was £1,702,000 with additional visitors for the UEFA Women’s EUROs events a value of £6M+ and Rugby League World Cup (RLWC) events £1M+.

Other benefits include enhanced reputation, education, health and business/sector support.

3.1 Highlights 2023/24

From April 2023 - March 2024 - The estimated contribution to our wider economy based on 89,000 event attendees was £2,047,000.

Other – Reputation, Education, Health, Business Support

- Leopards Fan Zones
- Leopards Home Coming Parade
- Expansion of our reputation as an event-friendly environment, encouraging further enquiries for large scale events.

Streets Apart Festival - A culmination of a three-year project supported by £120k investment from Historic England, the Streets Apart Festival transformed King Street for a jam-packed two-days in July attracting 12k visitors. The programme was created by a consortium of nine Wigan and Leigh based organisations, on a mission to bring world-class cultural activity to King Street.

An additional £42k funding was awarded, to work with pioneering outdoor arts organisation ‘Emergency Exit Arts’, delivering a parade from Mesnes Park to King Street. The parade was part of Hi-Street Fest, a national project celebrating heritage and history, and featured two giant puppets: Farrah the Fox, a 5m high mechanical puppet on a scooter; and Frankie, designed by 84 local young people and arts organisations. The parade also included 250 participants, made up of local dancers from WigLe Dance, Bom ta Bom percussion band and young people with decorated scooters, wheelchairs and skateboards.

The evening events included a programme curated by artist Darren Pritchard centering on LGBTQ+ Global Majority artists and female DJs. Sunday focused on local creatives with a community programme including artist workshops, heritage tours, more live music and dance performances. Engaging with 83 local artists in the

planning and across the weekend, the festival was a great success, laying the foundation for other large-scale events across the borough's town centres.

Light Night 2023 – Now a recognised highlight in the cultural calendar, with 19k visitors in 2023, the programme was awarded a £75k ACE grant to support delivery. A change of venue to Mesnes Park meant that growing demand could be met, with a programme of glowing art installations, exhibitions from internationally acclaimed artists and community performances curated and produced by Things That Go On Things, celebrating the borough's heritage and Greenheart.

In Leigh, a light parade took place and The Turnpike Gallery presented a mesmerising display of light art featuring the work of Jim Bond, Josh Space and Travelling Light Circus with an invitation for over 6k visitors to create some 'people-powered' art.

Leigh Leopards Homecoming, LUF & Towns Fund – On the back of a successful homecoming parade for Leigh Leopards, we attracted 15,000 in Leigh Town centre, testing the site at full capacity and the systems of the team.

October 2023 saw Leigh announced as one of the government's Towns Fund, with £20M awarded over 10 years, to support local economic growth. Additional good news followed in November, with a Levelling Up round 3 bid approved of just under £11.4M that will see significant improvements to Civic Square boosting cultural and events activity. A kickstart project 'Leigh Feast' with support from Leigh Innovation Board is also underway to boost the night-time economy.

3.2 Delivery 2024/25

2024 has been a year of consolidation of events within the programme and working practices across the team. The new structure aimed to create better functionality, to allow more events to be profitable. The best example of this is Wigan and Leigh Proms, which has collectively made a profit for the first time and is the blueprint for doing this across other areas.

It has also been a year to try out events that have been an aspiration for some time. The Events Team delivered a Euros '24 Fan Zone in Wigan and learned a lot about customer habits and trends. The assumption for many years has been that delivering these types of event will be very popular and will turn a profit. This was not the case and we learned that, in future, it will only be worth running these events within the knockout stages of the event. We also secured a new event at LSV, the Women's Tour of Britain, which showed that the campus is capable of more than just Stadium events and has opened the door to future events with British Cycling.

A business case was approved in 2024 with the Director of Strategy & Innovation and finance colleagues, to support events activity through to 2030.



From April 2024 - March 2025

The Events Team is on track to achieve income targets and contribution to the wider economy for 2024/25 of 149,000 event visits – £3,427,000.

Other benefits include: Reputation, Education, Health, Business Support.

Corporate Events

Event	Location	Dates	What
Flashes Festival of Nature	Pennington Flash	25 & 26 May	2 day free family-friendly event celebrating the nature of the flashes in Wigan & Leigh, part of National Nature Reserve Week
Higham Bequest	Mesnes Park	May & Aug	Annual programme of free concerts featuring military bands
80 th Anniversary of D-Day	Mesnes Park	8 June	One-off special, free event, commemorating the 80 th anniversary of D-Day
Armed Forces Day	Leigh Town Centre	29 June	Annual celebration of Armed Forces Day
Frost Fest Leigh	Leigh Town Centre	17 Nov	Festive activities for all the family including markets, funfair, music and light parade.
Light Night Wigan	Mesnes Park	21-23 Nov	Free family-friendly night out bringing together artists from across UK to illuminate Wigan.
Frost Fest Wigan	Wigan Town Centre	24 Nov	Festive activities for all the family including markets, entertainment and Santa parade.

Commercial Events

Event	Location	Dates	What
Leisure Centre Programmes	Robin Park & Leigh Leisure Centres	Year round	Year-round programme including competitive sporting events (gymnastics, PDC darts, wrestling, trampolining) Partner events - Wigan Beer Festival
EUROs 2024 Fan Zones	Believe Square	7 dates Jun/Jul	Ticketed fan zone venue to watch the EUROs football matches with extra entertainment
Women's Tour of Britain – British Cycling Event	LSV	9 June	Final stage of the tour sees the best riders in the country and global stars presented with their medals at LSV alongside a family fun day



SJM Concert Series	Robin Park Arena	5 dates in July	5 concert series of high profile artists including Richard Ashcroft; Liam Gallagher; The Lathums; James Arthur and supporting local bands
Leigh Feast	Leigh Civic Square	May-Oct	Six monthly pop-up event in Leigh town centre, showcasing the best of Leighs hospitality
Wigan Proms	Mesnes Park	31 Aug	Ticketed live music series event featuring popular classics
Leigh Proms	Pennington Park	7 Sept	Ticketed live music series event featuring popular classics

Community support

Event	Location	Dates	What
Run Wigan Festival	Mesnes Park	March 24	Over 4000 competitors in the largest running event within the borough.
St Georges Day Parade	Wigan Town Centre	April 24	Support the traditional Scouting event
Leigh Leopards Fan Zones	LSV	Summer 24	Testing new options for revenue generation and support LSV.
Community Day	Wigan Town Centre	June 24	Supporting the delivery of one of the borough biggest community led events.
Leigh Pride	Pennington Hall Park	27 July	Helping to develop and deliver this event, growing audiences and capabilities.
Wigan Pride	Wigan Town Centre	10 Aug	Supporting the committee to plan and deliver a growing event that supports our town centre.
Wigan 10k	Wigan Town Centre	1 Sept	Over 3000 competitors, feeding our local businesses.
Diggers Festival	Wigan Town Centre	7 Sept	Supporting the committee to plan and deliver a growing event that supports our town centre.

An additional ask for support with the provision of equipment to a number of community-led events including: Ashton Big Family Festival – Jubilee Park June; Shevington Fete – June; Atherton Carnival – June; Atherton Proms – Aug; Firs Park Fun Day – Aug.

4.0 Next Steps – Look ahead to 2025/26

Moving forward the Events Team will continue to deliver against the Council's broader ambitions as set out in A New Era - Progress with Unity by creating diverse, inclusive events and festivals that resonate with all members of the community. The



programme for 2025/26 will support the refreshed Cultural Manifesto 'The Fire Within - The Forge' and develop opportunities highlighted in the Creative Industries Asset Strategy. In turn, these events will attract visitors and investors enabling each town and neighbourhood to celebrate their identity whilst improving their health and wellbeing.

4.1 Programme Delivery 2025/26

2025/26 will see the delivery of the core event programme both commercial and corporate as described in year one of the five-year business case, building on the current success of the previous year.

From April 2025 - March 2026

The Events Team targets are set out below for 2025/26:

Income / Funding – direct income to Wigan Council:

- Forecast - £419k Commercial Event Programme (Leisure Centre)
- Forecast - £20k Concessions
- Forecast - £25K Commercial Sponsorship

Wider Economy – the estimated contribution to our wider economy based on visitors to the borough. Estimated 149,000 event visits – £3,427,000.

4.2 Key Events in 2025/26

Flashes Festival of Nature

The intent is to grow and develop the scope of the event for 2025 with support from Culture team and additional external funding from the Down to Earth project.

Leigh Feast (Foodie Friday)

The success of the 2024 programme is being reviewed against intended objectives. The continuation of this event will depend upon additional funding being secured (the 2024 programme being funded via UKSPF).

Ashton Foodie Friday

The Our Future Ashton regeneration project is due to be delivered during the 2025/26 calendar year. The events programme will be considered as part of the offer and will depend upon funding being made available to deliver.

Wigan Run Festival / Wigan 10k

In partnership with Joining Jack, the Run Festival event is scheduled to go ahead on Sunday 16th March 2025 with a half marathon and 5k runs. Wigan 10k will take place on Sunday 7th September.



Mesnes Park Music Festival

A plan to deliver a two day music festival in Mesnes Park in May 2025 has been formulated with a local promoter. The delivery of this event depends on the feasibility of developing the unused bowling green area of the park into a usable event space.

Armed Forces Day (Wigan)

Annual event scheduled to go ahead in Wigan on Saturday 28th June.

Robin Park Concerts / After Show Events

After the success of the concert series in 2024 the Events Team are keen to continue the relationship with SJM and host annual large scale music events. Discussions are currently underway to look at what potential there is in 2025.

Wigan Pride

Ran in partnership with the PRIDE Committee, 2025 sees its 10th anniversary year in Wigan.

Tournament Fan Zones

Potential to hold fan zones linked to the Women's EUROs 2025 tournament in July, where England are the current champions.

Wigan & Leigh Proms

Following two sell-out paid-for events in 2024, the team will look to build on the events in both capacity and commercial opportunities.

Frost Fest

A review of 2024 will take place with an alternative approach to programming taking place in Leigh, in order to build on successes for Frost Fest 2025.

Light Night 2025

Culture team has had core budget approved to support this key event taking place in Wigan. Management of the event is now in partnership with Things That Go On Things, supported by the Events Team.

Leigh Music Festival

Inspired by the legendary Pete Shelley, Leigh Music Festival will be a one day event with hopes to feature the Buzzcocks alongside aspiring home grown talent. This event was originally placed in the summer 2025 however due to the redevelopment of Civic Square Leigh, the intended footprint utilising Bengal St Car Park adjacent to the Pete Shelley mural will mean relocation or a move to the 2026/27 events programme.

Leisure Centre Commercial Programme

The events programme at Robin Park and Leigh Leisure Centres will continue to support a vast range of commercial sporting, community and cultural events with income targets set to grow.



4.3 New Opportunities in 2025/26

Manchester International Festival - Modern Legends

As part of the wider Manchester International Festival El Conde de Torrefiel will develop a programme of contemporary theatre to be performed during a two-week period in July at various locations, celebrating the people and places of Wigan Borough. The Events Team will provide operational support to the creative partnership of Factory International and El Conde de Torrefiel.

Animation of Wigan Pier

In line with the Creative Industries Asset Strategy there is an opportunity to animate Wigan Pier with a series of pop-up events including music, theatre and visual arts.

Haigh Hall

As the redevelopment of Haigh Hall progresses opportunities arise to animate the site. The events team are keen to develop those opportunities and promote community engagement.

4.4 Commercial Aspirations

One of the key aims for the Events Team during year one of delivery 2025/26 is to capitalise on commercial activity that brings significant revenue in to offset event costs for core delivery. After the success of the programme of music events at Robin Park, the team are keen to continue the relationship with SJM and host annual large scale music events. Discussions are currently underway to look at what potential there is in 2025.

A menu of sponsorship packages is now available for local businesses to identify opportunities to promote their brand. This will be rolled out in the coming months with the aim to secure significant sponsorship for the 2025/26 programme. More targeted and joined up marketing will also support event sales.

A business case has been compiled to secure funds to purchase and run a catering unit at a variety of events. This will be managed and staffed by the hospitality team. A mobile bar, currently operated by the hospitality team is generating regular income. The addition of a catering unit will increase the opportunities.

It is the intention to secure funds to enable the events team to acquire a fit for purpose storage unit for event equipment. The secure site will enable the team to begin investing in event equipment that can be hired out to event organisers and purchase equipment that is required regularly by the events team, instead of hiring in from a third party. This facility will not only save money but has the potential to generate significant income.

The team is forging stronger links than ever with Leigh Sports Village and will support the delivery aspirations of the campus. This will be with the provision of equipment for smaller events, but joint working to attract and/or deliver large scale events to bring income into this council-owned facility.



4.5 Risks

Corporate Events

- **Rising Costs:** There is an expectation to deliver a programme of events across Wigan Borough. The cost of putting on events continue to climb, yet budgets are growing tighter. This poses a significant challenge: how do we do more for less? And how do we do it well? Balancing budget with the quality of event experience remains a constant focus.
- **Travel:** The cost and unpredictability of travel remains a challenge to the event sector. Attendees are finding it harder to justify the cost and environmental impact of travelling, especially when it's compounded by logistical issues found throughout the travel industry. Therefore, event planners have to prioritise event formats that minimise the stress associated with travel.
- **Technology Issues:** A great event requires great technological support, and yet event planners are identifying tech constraints as one of their top challenges. Most events today reflect a combination of in-person, virtual, and hybrid experiences, and require a robust technological setup to power them successfully. From event registrations to check-ins, and live streaming to mobile eventing apps, the need for seamless tech flexibility is essential for a successful event that brings value to all involved.

Commercial Events

- **Rise in supply chain costs:** the well-documented rise in supply chain costs, coupled with inflation, is a major issue affecting all outdoor events/festivals. Events set ticket prices and go on sale well in advance, so are unable to mitigate unexpected rises with additional increases in ticket prices. Huge rises in costs are having a devastating impact on the sector.
- **The cost of living crisis:** has impacted audiences disposable income, and there is evidence of some individuals who are not able to attend outdoor events/festivals as a result. There's also new evidence where some audiences who would go to multiple events/festivals though the year are now reducing the number they can attend.
- **Continued drive on sustainability** is the correct methodology for our planet but does introduce further financial challenges as the sector adapts.

Other Risks

2026/27 will be the final year of the Council's tenancy deal with The Edge (with an allocation of free event space which has been used for both corporate events and to support key partner events). A new deal needs to be negotiated for the wider Council.



Appendix 1 - Return on Investment

Calculating the return on investment to date is complex, due to the changing nature of the Events team, our priorities and move into strategy and innovation directorate. For the purposes of this report we have included information and financial reporting based on the current structure of the team, combining our financial information.

It should also be noted that the contribution of the team can be measured in different ways and not just direct income. We also have key projects that have contributed to the wider economy and have estimated the value of these contributions using estimates and guidance from our visitor economy partner at Marketing Manchester.

There are also other reasons why events are delivered beyond financial contribution, these are harder to quantify, but in many cases support the overall health and wellbeing of our residents and support our Live, Work and Visit strategies for the borough.

For this report we have categorised our return on investments as:

- 1) Income / Funding – direct income to Wigan Council
- 2) Wider Economy – the estimated contribution to our wider economy based on visitors to the borough. Marketing Manchester estimate an average spend per head of £46 per person for a day visit to our region. For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that the spend per person will be less, due to a mixed family audience for most events, and that our audience is a mixture of visitors and residents. For the purposes of the report we have applied a 50% reduction and has estimated a spend of £23 per visitor.

Other benefits include enhanced reputation, education, health and business/sector support.

Additional Financial Contribution

Across Team Wigan we have assisted a wide range of departments, contributing in-kind to a large number of projects that continue to develop our borough offer. Many of which have brought additional external investment, some highlights are mentioned below:

- £130k value per host city ACE/NLHF WEUROS national cultural/heritage programme
- £69,815 NLHF The mine is Yours
- 1.5m Government's Cultural Recovery Funds (through Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England)
- £120k Historic England, 'Streets Apart' 3-year Cultural Programme for the King Street Heritage Action Zone.



Relevance Check

Service Area: Strategy and Innovation - Events Team

Service Lead: Peter Hughes

Date: 18th October 2024

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed?

No