

Appendix One: IPW Review Report

In consultation with stakeholders, and through extensive desk research, IPW identified that the city already enjoyed a diverse event ecology, perhaps more so than many had anticipated – or that many first-time visitors to the city might expect. They found that Wolverhampton is a city with understated pride and an unvarnished authenticity. The draft strategy embraces these qualities and seeks to reflect them in its various recommendations.

It is also cognisant of other local strategies such as the draft Cultural Compact Strategy, Vision and Plan of Action which outlines a series of principles focussed on harnessing the ‘transformative power of arts, culture and the creative industries’ to address ‘challenges faced around economic growth and social value’.

IPW’s work aligns often disparate thinking to date and builds on outline objectives and principles, by consolidating a practical way forward in the short-term.

Events are a core part of the visitor economy and any strategy to develop them should complement, and be a keystone of, existing tourism strategies. They can be an effective means of reinforcing the city’s brand and can completely transform a city’s image – Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture in 1990 transformed perceptions of the city and raised its profile internationally. More recently, and closer to home, Coventry’s period as UK City of Culture 2021 was a game-changer in terms of the city’s national profile.

There is a significant economic impact from events, both direct and indirect, however, they have a broader social impact at community as well as city-scale – they can reinforce wellbeing, encourage participation through volunteering, and be micro-economic drivers.

There are three primary objectives of the Strategy, namely to:

- **Change perceptions of the city** - *by enhancing its profile and reputation nationally and internationally*
- **Increase the social benefit and value from events** - *by creating opportunities for employment and skills development*
- **Increase the economic benefit and return from events** - *by generating significant new direct and indirect spend.*

Driving footfall

Driving footfall is the key objective of events – whether for social or economic objectives. However, significant competition exists in the market to attract audiences, whether visitors or locals, as well as a lot of choice for promoters as to where they host events. A pivotal question for both is – *Why Wolverhampton?* – why would they choose to promote my event there: is there an audience, what do they like, what are the practical implications, *is there an incentive?* And for the audience: is this something I really want to see, will it be a good experience, will I be safe, is it value for money – as well as all the practical implications of travel, accommodation, food... essentially, *is it somewhere I want to spend my time and my money?* This can be summarised as:

- What will persuade a) public, and b) promoters?
- What's the incentive?
- What's the infrastructure?

In developing a five-year events strategy, the challenge is to match the aspiration to the infrastructure – building on where the city is now and where it wants to be in 5 (and 10) years-time. The diagram (*Figure 1: Level of Impact and Profile*) below illustrates this:



Fig. 1 Level of Impact and Profile

Growing our events ecology

There are four principal areas that a healthy events ecology requires – People, Venues, Resources and Infrastructure (*see Figure 2: The 'Events Mix'*) – and when you break each of these areas down, you have a complex system that requires nurturing and oversight.

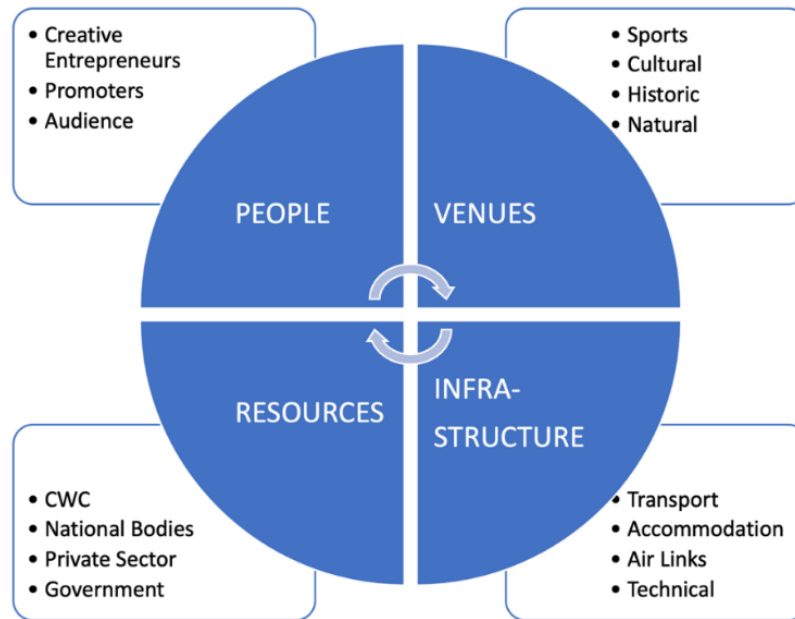


Fig. 2 The 'Events Mix'

The ecology needs to be delivered by a range of partners – public, commercial and voluntary – working to joint objectives. But it requires the strategic direction and monitoring to be undertaken centrally.

A brief SWOT of these four principal areas reveals areas for development e.g., creating an environment that encourages creative entrepreneurs, and improved overnight accommodation: as well as particular strengths, such as the public transport nexus and public sector support. A more detailed SWOT analysis will be developed in conjunction with partners as part of the work to establish a destination management partnership and plan.

Different events need different types of support and infrastructure and, therefore, different partners to help deliver. CWC is a vitally important partner, but its role varies in each circumstance from facilitator to direct provider to partner to investor. This strategy identifies four broad categories of event:

- Commercial - an event for which a rental is paid, or for which box office/earned income is a significant driver
- Corporate - business or private events that range from conferences and seminars to launch parties
- Community - more localised events engaging specific groups or locales, not seeking to be commercial
- Civic - key events in the city's calendar (often annual) that celebrate an important aspect of the city's communities.

As can be seen, the range of events – their scale and type and purpose – is diverse – and finding a common purpose to inform them in an overarching strategy can be challenging.

The three objectives outlined earlier – *increasing profile, social and economic benefits* – provide a broad but clear framework, however, it is a vision that requires to be shared and supported.

Practical aspects of oversight and governance, market intelligence, and encouraging investment are constants – but these are most effective when done collaboratively. CWC has a pivotal role in determining the strategic direction, but its delivery requires buy-in from a broad coalition of partners in the public, private, third and academic sectors, addressing key questions:

- is the vision shared?
- is there an appropriate performance framework for city events based on shared desired outcomes and outcome measures?
- are internal-CWC and city-wide governance structures needed to coordinate and develop city events?
- can the new strategy be underpinned by market intelligence and a customer-focused approach?
- can the city facilitate and support private investment in high quality events that fit the city's key themes?
- what's the balance between accessible public events that increase social value and commercial events which generate income for reinvestment in the programme?

Wider social and economic environment

Underpinning this approach is a Theory of Change (see *Figure 3: The Broader Social and Economic Environment* below) that considers the broader environment of economic and social impact in Wolverhampton i.e., *why* investment in events is important. Events are looking to attract new audiences and visitors to the city, but also to engage disconnected individuals and communities. Partly this can be done through attendance at events, but the latter is often through direct involvement in the creation of a more localised event, often at very modest scales.

Enhancing creative activities through events can lead to more confident and resilient communities, more empowered citizens, and ultimately a more resilient city environment, physically and psychologically.

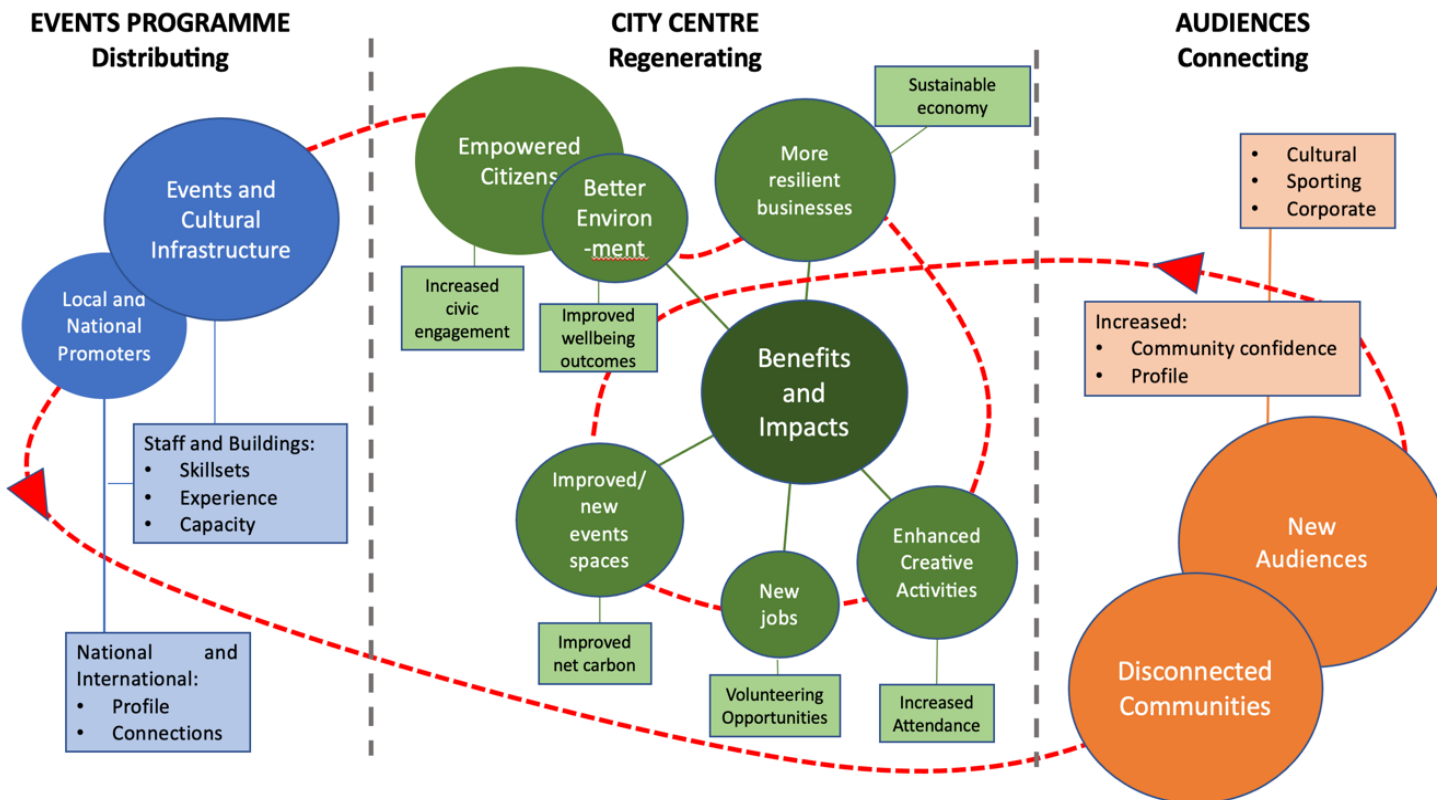


Fig. 3 The Broader Social and Economic Environment'

Events are only part of the answer. They are most effective when they are part of an integrated approach to city regeneration, development or enhancement. They link well with strategies to improve the city economy, wellbeing, and the environment. They thrive on excellent transport infrastructure, effective city marketing, and a welcoming and attractive public realm.

They have complete synergy with the local food and beverage (F&B) and accommodation offer. They can help drive improvements in this area – as seen recently with the arrival of the V&A in Dundee and the consequent improvement and increase in local F&B/accommodation support infrastructure.

Ultimately, it is about setting a sense of place – reinforcing it for locals, introducing it to visitors – and being confident in the delivery. There is much for Wolverhampton to be proud of historically and in contemporary Wolverhampton – and much of it is in the character of the people who live there. Grounded, with a good sense of life's priorities. These are pride-worthy values – they are also worth sharing – and reflecting in the programme of events (and their marketing).

Although CWC is not the only events provider in the city, it is a principal partner and driver, and it's useful to consider to what extent it may be involved in various initiatives. CWC has two main functions: as a facilitator – making things happen; and as a direct funder and/or promoter.

Setting targets to measure future success

Visualising the future – setting targets for where the city wants to be – is an essential part of the Strategy. To this end, IPW...took the approach of developing a narrative from the perspective of 2028, looking back at the previous 5 years. This can be found at **Appendix two** and is intended to illustrate how to achieve the objectives rather than be definitive about particular events.

The starting point is having a clear vision:

“By 2028, we want people to think differently about the city... as a place where things happen, as a place they might visit, maybe as a place they might look to relocate.”

Appendix one provides an illustration of what can be brought to reality within the next five years. The type and range of events build on those that are happening, or have happened, or have been discussed and planned with potential partners.

It recognises that Wolverhampton is not starting from scratch – it is already an Events City. IPW found in their research some 1,000 events in the city a year including 30,000 visitors a fortnight to the football, 300,000 a year visiting the Grand Theatre and an estimated 300,000 a year set to visit The Halls. There is an infrastructure of spaces, people and funding that exists, but can be made to work a bit harder with some strategic focus and a bit of pump-priming in its early stages.

As importantly, there is a will to do this, and a recognition that for positive change to take place, the status quo is not an option. The city has ambition to develop in many service and geographic areas, and events will play a part in making this happen.

There's no need to reinvent the wheel. The next 5 years will be a challenging period because of external macro-economic and social issues – but that will always be the case, whenever the strategy is implemented. The city needs to adopt a 'strengths-based' approach, focusing on the assets the city already has and start with them.

There is hard and soft infrastructure already in place – for the latter, the city's events team has a wealth of experience, knowledge and goodwill. For the former, Wolverhampton has terrific transport strengths – it's easy to get to and to leave – an important consideration for external visitors.

It also has a unique demography, and that should be reflected to a greater extent in the annual events programme – reminding people (in the city as well as outside) what a vibrant range of cultures the City of Wolverhampton has.

Similarly, talking with the city's current stakeholders (actual and potential) in the events ecology revealed a range of opportunities for new events, co-curation, and networking. Some of these are indicated overleaf, and others are included in the earlier '2028 visioning'.

The presence of AEG/ASM in the city is a great opportunity to work with an events operator of international scale not only in The Halls, but potentially across the city. Leveraging their experience and connections will make a significant difference to the larger-scale event offer and infrastructure in the city.

ASM's range of contacts will allow them to develop the corporate market over the next 5 years – initially this should have a focus at the Halls, but with the intention to increasingly roll out across the city in the subsequent 5 years.

The city should work towards data-driven decision-making – know your audience: find out why they've come as well as where they're from. Keep in touch with them – push information to them, pull useful data from them. There are commercial digital partners that can help with this that, allied with the city's city centre 5G rollout, can make this a reality within 5 years.

The events sector is an industry and there are skilled and unskilled jobs in that market – administrative, marketing, technical, driving, performance, management. The city's public and academic partners need to work with its events and cultural providers to develop a clear ladder of opportunity for young people and those returning to the jobs market. This is an area with particular appeal for a younger demographic and can help address some of the city's broader employment challenges in this area. In summary, make the most of:

- AEG partnership
- ASM Corporate Development
- Place Informatics – audience data
- Digital: 'Welcome App' and Visit Wolverhampton platform
- Skills Development – ladder of opportunity
- 3 cities partnership

Some opportunities are specifically event related (highlighted in the 2028 visioning). While the focus is often on the larger 'tentpole' attractions, the majority of the city's events will be on a smaller scale at community level. This is an ideal scale to demonstrate Wolverhampton's diversity.

Some events already exist – others will need to be encouraged and supported through proactive schemes that attract new promoters. Targeted funding incentives can build the city's reputation in specific areas such as live music and a potential 'Bands in Bars' concept scheme.

Consumer markets with different specialisms – clothes, food and drink – are affordable ways of creating city-wide events that are light on permanent infrastructure and respond well and quickly to local demand. However, the council will need to ensure a seamless approach across commissioning directorates to improve quantity, consistency and market development.

Delivering wider economic benefit

A key challenge is to retain the economic benefit of events in the city. As the diagram below (*Figure 4: Retaining Economic Benefit*) shows, the principal indirect economic impact comes in two areas – overnight accommodation and food and beverage (F&B). There is direct spend on ticket sales and merchandise at the event itself, which is of interest to the promoter to ensure its sustainability, but beyond that the aim should be to keep the events indirect spend in the city.

Direct Economic Benefit for Wolverhampton?

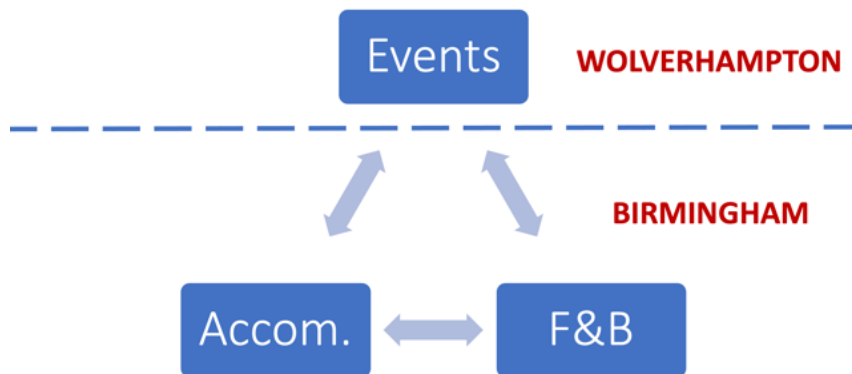


Fig. 4 Retaining Economic Benefit

Birmingham's accommodation and F&B offers will always be an attraction for some, but proximity to the event is a key deciding factor for audiences looking for somewhere to stay or eat. As the event programme develops, so does the opportunity for providers in this area.

Hotels and restaurants will begin to cluster in the city as the events footfall increases, but this may need to be incentivised in the early stages.

The impact of events at local level goes beyond the economic. A programme of micro-grants targeted at initiating small scale events in local communities is a cost-effective way of stimulating volunteering, as well as celebrating local diversity. This can be seen from the tremendous success of the Kings Coronation Celebration Grant which supported 140 local community-building events over the 6th – 8th May 2023.

Broadening the base of local events activity in the ecology helps develop the overall supply chain, as well as creating an early rung in the ladder of opportunity for young people looking to establish themselves in the sector.

Building on the city's distinctiveness

One of the beneficial consequences of this approach is to enhance the distinctively Wolverhampton nature of the city's events offer. Events are indivisible from tourism, and a crucial part of the strategy is to re-focus the messaging to the visitor about the city. This needs to be fully integrated with the overall city messaging and consistency of message is key.

There are several audiences this needs to be pointed at, and while the overarching message must be uniform, the detail of the city's offer will require more nuanced marketing to promoters, to locals, to regional visitors, and to those from the rest of the UK/international.

For example, local parents with young children may be persuaded by safety messaging, visitors by ease of access, and promoters by audience reach and diversity. So, messaging/marketing the city must address the key questions:

- *Wolverhampton Welcome* – what is the unique selling proposition (USP)?
- Authentic, grounded community
- Easy city to navigate, safe, helpful

- We want to help you make events happen (*promoters*)
- Wolverhampton? You're welcome (*public*)

Essential infrastructure: setting up a destination management partnership

The messaging needs to be delivered and authentic, and to that end, and in line with the recent national [De Bois Review of Destination Management](#) recommendations which have been endorsed by Government, a local Destination Management Partnership (DMP) that is strongly events-focussed – e.g. Visit Wolverhampton – is a very important means to achieve this and needs to be strongly considered.

This body can be relatively small (perhaps with seconded staff from CWC and others), but it brings the key partners together and can be tasked with coordination and delivery of the events strategy, wider city visitor experience as well as ensuring consistency of messaging. For some it will function as a DMP, others as a Convention Bureau, and for others as a Promoters Gateway. Simply, it is an advocacy and enabling tool for the city with clear function and structure, including:

- Quasi-independent governance
- Conduit for private sector engagement
- Maximise/collate local assets
- Coordination and monitoring

The DMP has the potential to be the strategic forum to progress key policy issues such as the eco-systems for visitor experience in the city centre and urban centres, night-time economy vibrancy and audience/market development. Building on the above, the events programme should also proactively look at how events can help address the perceived challenges in the city, such as:

- Perceptions of the city
- City centre environment
- Current DMP offer online
- No joined-up events supply line
- Centre vs wider city
- Transport in the city

Some of these will create opportunities to subvert existing perceptions (as outlined in the 2028 visioning) – and look at how existing civic assets can be used imaginatively. For example, using the city's pop art collection to help shape the design and theming of a new hotel in the city centre.

The Box Space initiative is already looking at ways that an underutilised urban environment can be transformed through programming of events and a curated pop-up food and beverage offer.

Improving the visitor experience

The over-riding aim of the events supply chain must be user-focused to improve the visitor experience – from the ways in which customers find out about the event to maintaining contact with them afterwards to see how they enjoyed it and push future information to them.

Events cultivate friends of the city – people are coming to enjoy themselves and the city has to deliver: the event itself has to be good, but the rest of the visitor experience – the journey to and from, the food, the built environment – essentially, the Wolverhampton Welcome. Making it easier for visitors to know about and get to events is vital. Figure 5 below shows how the total visitor experience journey fits together.



Fig.5 Visitor Journey

The same has to happen for events promoters – they need to know they will be welcomed and supported and encouraged to deliver events in the city. As the diagram below illustrates, (Figure 6: the Promoters Journey) this requires a quite different (and equally complex) supply chain, with a range of public sector providers required at various points – various CWC services, police, volunteers.



Fig.6 Promoters Journey

Critical to the success of this is the coordinating role that CWC can play with its own internal services – licensing, roads, events – to make the experience as joined up and easy for the potential promoter, whether they are a local community group or a national organisation. This coordinating role is another that Visit Wolverhampton would be well placed to deliver if it were located within CWC. The key thing is to make it easy for the promoters for events to happen.

The metrics for success are twofold – there are the outcomes that are sought during and after the event, for instance: increased footfall, greater economic impact and per capita spend yield, more people volunteering to deliver, and such like. There are also the metrics by which to assess at the planning stage whether to support or deliver an event. At its simplest, these are: the Profile it will deliver (does it reinforce the city brand and objectives), the Reward/Impact it will have (*direct* in terms of event sustainability, and *indirect* via additional spend locally), and consequent level of Risk.

The illustration below considers these from a CWC perspective in terms of a large event delivered by (Figure 7: Assessing benefit/impact of large-scale events) a third party (A), by CWC (B), and an event such as the recent British Art Show (C).

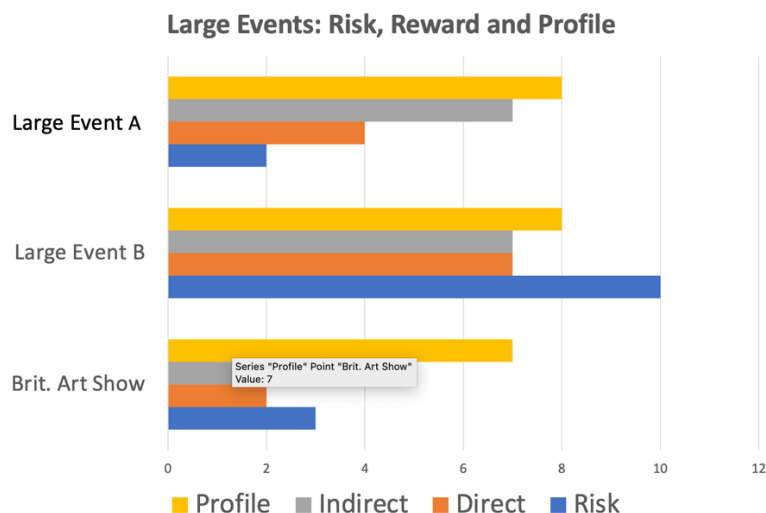
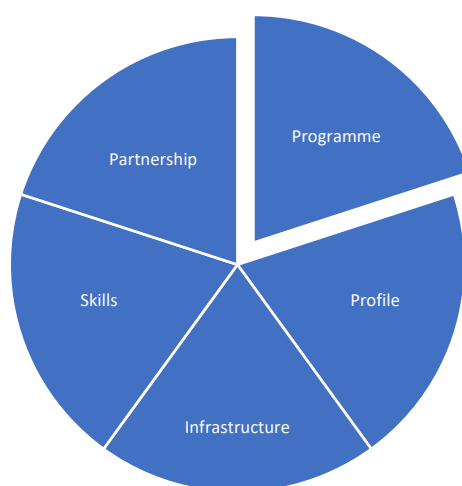


Fig.7 Assessing benefit/impact of large-scale events

It's important not to underestimate the impact an effective events programme can have, often quite disproportionate to the level of public sector investment. And well delivered public events bestow a view of good civic management and competence by CWC more generally. But it's equally important to be realistic about the contribution of events. Events will not change the city centre economy, but they will make an important contribution to that change. They won't single-handedly transform the perception of the city, but they have a major role to play in helping make that a reality.

Events can help contribute to many areas of civic policy, but **the strategy requires specific targets**, and the following are collated from the narrative above (not in order of importance) and grouped in 5 key areas for development. These are further broken down into targets underneath:



Profile / Marketing

1. Increased awareness of the city nationally
2. Coordinated marketing of transport options

3. Coordinated marketing of wider hospitality, food and beverage offer.

Infrastructure Investment

4. New visitor infrastructure – hotels
5. Successful delivery of new assets eg Box Space initiative
6. Single box office and information point of entry for visitors
7. Promoters gateway – single point of entry
8. Data collation on visitor/market trends
9. Increased economic impact

Skills Development

10. Increased volunteer support for events
11. More opportunities to showcase local artists
12. Increased jobs
13. New vocational course in events operation and management

Partnership Collaboration

14. Local businesses engaged in event support and delivery
15. Three Cities Event concordat
16. Creation of Destination Management Partnership / Convention Bureau (e.g. Visit Wolverhampton)

Programme

17. Families retained in the town centre
18. Greater presence of televised live sport from the city
19. Fixed schedule of national sporting events
20. Support for increased diversity celebrations

Oversight of the events calendar is another key role of the Destination Management Partnership (DMP) / Visit Wolverhampton, which can take a strategic approach to the annual planning calendar. The diagram below (*Fig.8: Illustrative Events Calendar: Blocks and Tentpoles*) illustrates taking a *blocks and tentpoles* approach. It is recommended that the Council look at themed periods – a designated week, fortnight or month that a range of promoters of all scales can generate work under that banner across the city. Within that, there needs to be tentpole events – high-profile one-offs that draw attention to the city. Focusing on more self-generated content should be an integrated element of every annual programme – ensuring that Wulfrunians see themselves, their activities and their communities reflected in their city.



Fig.8 Illustrative Events Calendar: Blocks and Tentpoles

Number of Events

A proportionate annual increase in the number of events is proposed, particularly from years 2 to 4, as illustrated in the table (*Table 1: Summary of Years 1-5 Number of Events*) below:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Total Funded Current Events	12	12	12	12	12	12
Total Commercial Events		8	13	16	29	29
Total Corporate Events		2	4	6	7	7
Total Community Events		9	14	17	17	17
Total Civic Events		3	5	5	5	5
TOTAL BUDGET	12	34	48	56	70	70
<u>Indicative Attendances</u>						
Total Current Events	?	?	?	?	?	?
Total Commercial Events		56,000	97,000	112,000	209,000	209,000
Total Corporate Events		2,000	4,000	6,000	7,000	7,000
Total Community Events		22,500	35,000	42,500	42,500	42,500
Total Civic Events		3,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
TOTAL BUDGET	0	83,500	141,000	165,500	263,500	263,500

Economic Impact

The Economic Impact (EI) is based on a per capita amount calculated differently for each of the 4 event categories i.e. a Commercial event visitor has a greater impact than one attending a community event. The additional annual EI is indicated in the table (*Table 2: Summary of Years 1-5 Projected Economic Impact* below:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	£	£	£	£	£
Total Commercial Events		1,848,000	3,201,000	3,696,000	6,897,000
Total Corporate Events		90,000	180,000	270,000	315,000
Total Community Events		180,000	270,000	300,000	300,000
Total Civic Events		45,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
TOTAL	0	2,163,000	3,726,000	4,341,000	7,587,000

Table 2 Indicative Summary of Years 1-5 Projected Economic Impact

Action Plan

In terms of operational delivery, based on the specific targets, outlined earlier, there are several operational areas outlined above – Profile; Infrastructure; Skills; and Partnership - that will require planning and implementation – a timeline for these is suggested in the table (*Fig.9: Operational Action Plan summary*) below:

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Profile / Marketing						
Development of Brand	█	█	█	█	█	█
Development of Website		█	█	█	█	█
Online Marketing Portal			█	█	█	█
Infrastructure Investment						
Box Space Fanzone		█	█	█	█	█
Data Contract			█	█	█	█
Promoters Gateway				█	█	█
Single Box Office					█	█
Pop Hotel opens						█
Skills Development						
Vocational Course - preparation	█	█	█	█	█	█
Wolves Welcome Crew			█	█	█	█
Partnership Collaboration						
Visit Wolverhampton established	█	█	█	█	█	█
Three Cities Concordat		█	█	█	█	█

Fig.9 Operational Action Plan summary

The priorities are suggested by the scheduling above, but the key one is the creation of a wider city ‘vehicle’ i.e a Destination Management Partnership (DMP) like Visit Wolverhampton, to take forward and coordinate the other initiatives. The Council may need external support to develop this, given current resource levels.

The exact nature of this body should be explored further, however, it should have both a *catalytic* role i.e. bring partners together to help develop and deliver some initiatives, such as the development of the Events Academy vocational course; and a *coordinating* role, for example, ensuring the development of a brand with associated online presence is invested in by all key partners.

Such a body should also have oversight of development of the annual events programme, not necessarily as a direct provider, but by ensuring there is the broad geographic and thematic range of events across the calendar, as explored earlier.

The DMP will also have a very important role locally in working with and influencing the work of the emerging Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) being developed at a regional West Midlands footprint level by the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC). Indeed, WMGC have a vital role to play in supporting the development and operation of the local DMP to ensure that the city benefits as much as possible from the regional and national opportunities that will potentially be filtered through the LVEP.

The DMP will also create a collaborative public/private sector partnership environment which makes the city’s position and case stronger when applying for national funding streams. One of the key pieces of work of the DMP will be to develop a strategic pipeline of projects, with strong ‘shovel-ready’, evidence-based business cases, so the city is prepared and agile when national funding rounds are announced – often at short notice.

New events should be phased in over the 5-year period illustrated in the table (*Fig. 10: Programme Action Plan summary*) below including both community and commercial:

Event	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Sounds in the City Festival						
Bands in Bars (support scheme)						
Wolverhampton Welcome Weekend						
Cycling Festival/Road Race/Trial						
British Kabaddi League / Final						
Kabaddi World Cup / Final and outreach / Festival						
Winter Festival of Light						
Football Development						
Comedy Festival						

Fig.10 Programme Action Plan summary