

## **TOURISM & DESTINATION MARKETING - REVIEW 2023**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Tourism and Destination Marketing Team are responsible for the marketing and promotion of Gloucester as an investment and visitor destination. They own and manage the Visit Gloucester, Meet Gloucester, and the Film Gloucester websites as well as their associated social media sites. The team undertake a range of marketing activity aimed to attract visitors, activate residents to engage with the Visitor Economy and consumer-facing businesses, and to support investment into the city.

They collaborate closely with other teams including Economic Development to support the case for attracting business to the city, and within the wider Cultural Marketing Team in Cultural Services to support audience development. The team provide support to the visitor economy businesses in the city offering business support, as well as provision of visitor data. The team work alongside the Strategic Events & Marketing Group, which is made up of key Visitor Economy and creative industry stakeholders from across the city.

### 2. THE TEAM

The Tourism & Destination Marketing Team (operating under the brand name 'Visit Gloucester') consists of two full-time officers and sit within the wider Cultural Marketing Team, which includes two additional marketing officers who market other areas of the Culture Service, including Gloucester Guildhall, the Museum of Gloucester, Festivals & Events and Blackfriars Priory. This wider Cultural Marketing Team is overseen by The Tourism and Destination Marketing Manager.



### 3. OBJECTIVES 2023

The Tourism & Destination Marketing Team work to an annual Destination Marketing Plan, which is written in December each year and signed off at Cabinet in February. Due to a staffing gap between the outgoing and incoming Tourism & Destination Marketing Manager (October 2022 to January 2023), the Destination Marketing Plan's objectives for 2023 were adopted only in draft format by the Council. These draft objectives were consulted on by the Tourism & Destination Marketing Steering Board and agreed by that Board in October 2022. Those draft objectives are:

#### **Objectives:**

1. Continue to work to build back Gloucester's core inbound audiences.
2. Bring Gloucester's Place Branding to the fore. Continue to support businesses and other council departments to use elements of the Place Brand in their designs.
3. Support the growth of Gloucester's Visitor Economy through providing promotional support, advice, and research for the industry.
4. Grow Gloucester's domestic audience base and increase engagement with our online audiences through delivering exceptional B2C communications.
5. Working with our partners and stakeholder to deliver two major seasonal marketing campaigns in Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter
6. Create content that promotes sustainable travel in and to the city.

This report shows the progress of the Tourism & Destination Marketing Team in delivering the objectives outlined in the Marketing Plan and related Service Plan.



## 4. MARKETING ACTIVITY

Below is a summary of specific marketing campaigns and dedicated promotional activity carried by the team in 2023. We have committed nearly £13,000 to marketing campaigns in 2023, spread across nine campaigns. In each campaign report, you can see a detailed breakdown of activity, overall campaign cost, and results.

### 4.1. JANUARY – FEBRUARY: KNIFE ANGEL



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Major Event Promotion

**Service Provided:** Paid Media Campaign, Organic Social Media, Email and Online

**Campaign cost:** £155.58

**Summary of activity:** The National Monument for Serious Violence and Aggression, The Knife Angel, was in Gloucester for the month of February as part of its national Anti-Violence tour. The Angel is a beautiful memorial designed to celebrate lives lost to acts of serious violence. Visit Gloucester supported the event through paid media, organic social media, email, and online promotion.

**Results:**

Paid Advertising	
Impressions	55,536
Reach	18,444
Clicks	4,765
Click-through Rate (CTR)	8.58%
Cost per click (CPC)	£0.03
Landing page views	1,572
Cost per landing page view	£0.10



Gloucester Cathedral saw an increase in visitor numbers of 215% in February 2023, compared with February 2022, with a 34.5% increase in donations for the same period, a key indicator of the positive impact of the Knife Angel being in the city.

February 2023 also saw a 7% increase in footfall in the city centre compared with February 2022. While a rise in footfall is part of a general trend in the city year-on-year (see section 5.7 of this report for more on footfall), Knife Angel was an obvious positive contributor to that rise.

#### 4.2. MARCH – JUNE: RPS INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Major Event Promotion

**Service Provided:** Paid Media Campaign

**Campaign Cost:** £699.88

**Summary of activity:** to boost visitor numbers to the RPS International Photography exhibition in the second half of its run at the Museum of Gloucester, Visit Gloucester worked with paid media partners Big Wave Media to run an extensive traffic and reach campaign across Meta networks.

**Results:**

Paid Advertising	
Impressions	517,150
Reach	149,472
Clicks	25,426
Click-through Rate (CTR)	4.92%
Cost per click (CPC)	£0.03
Landing page views	8,824
Cost per landing page view	£0.08



Campaign cost	£699.88
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Across April-June, while this campaign was running, footfall at the museum was 5,905. 318 tickets were sold online through art tickets and total attendance, including door sales, at RPS was 1,564. This was a visitor increase of nearly 25% compared with the RPS exhibition in 2022.

The comparatively low sales conversion rate compared to the good click-through rate suggests that while the *advertising* of the product appealed to the market, either the product itself was not sufficiently attractive to warrant a purchase or that customers reached by Visit Gloucester were not also reached by Museum marketing on other channels, which lowers likelihood of conversion.

#### 4.3. APRIL – MAY: THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5

**Campaign Type:** activation trail, promotion of citywide events, civic events, and community activities

**Service Provided:** Organic social media, email and online promotion, printed and site-specific activations, city dressing.

**Campaign Cost:** £367

**Summary of activity:** The Coronation meant promoting a substantial number of community-produced events, as well as those from the businesses of Gloucester, the BID and other major partners, including Gloucester Quays. Visit Gloucester created a hub webpage including signposting of events across the city and where activations could be enjoyed, including selfies at the Cathedral, free paper crowns and other merchandise at the Quays, and various events organised by Gloucester BID. This promotion was supported by email marketing, organic social media, printed poster, and blogs.

Visit Gloucester supported the comms team by providing video and photo content for the international press for the Lamprey Pie presentation event, including booking and briefing photography, and providing information to editors. News of the event was picked up in the UK nationals and was directly covered in the New York Times.



To encourage people to explore the city to experience a number of attractions, and better tell the city's story, the Visit Gloucester Team created a video-enabled interactive trail inspired by the Coronation called Royal Connections. At nine sites across the city, visitors were encouraged to scan QR codes which would take them to the Visit Gloucester website where they could watch short videos featuring city archaeologist Andrew Armstrong explaining the exciting royal connection at that location.

**Results:**

<b>Royal Connections Trail</b>	
Impressions	17,236
Trail Sheets Picked Up	122
Number of Participants	305*
Trail completion and entry submitted	33.3%
Royal Connections Landing Page views	486
Activity Cost	£367

\*We estimate participants based on 2.5 people per trail sheet/map. This is usually because groups use them, and most participants are two people (one adult, one child).

<b>Coronation Landing Page</b>	
Most views VG Webpage 1 Apr-21 May	
Page views	2149
Unique visitors	1445
Average engagement	36 seconds

We were pleased that The Lamprey Pie presentation photography Visit Gloucester commissioned was distributed internationally. The Communications Team will have detailed press and PR performance statistics.

Overall participation was strong for this primarily low-cost organic campaign, run as such due to uncertainty over return on investment for promotion of commercial ventures over the Coronation Weekend. Many businesses in Gloucester chose not to heavily invest in Coronation activities because the messaging around the event emphasised to both domestic and visiting audiences that the key place to participate was in their local communities. The impact of this was that footfall was slightly down in May compared with 2022.

**4.4. APRIL – JULY: THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL**





**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Event Promotion

**Service Provided:** Organic social, blog and online promotion.

**Campaign Cost:** £0

**Summary of activity:** To help support the ticket sales of this high-profile national-level event, Visit Gloucester ran an additional communications campaign to support Three Choirs Festival in the city, including home page spots, several blog posts, organic social media coverage.

**Results:**

Online	
Page views	864
Blog reads	265

Social Media	Impressions	Engagement	Reach	Clicks
Instagram	5,420	301	4,502	N/A
Facebook	20,816	1,042	19,671	136
Twitter	886	34	N/A	6

4.5. MAY – JULY: HI STREET FEST





**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Major Event Promotion

**Service Provided:** Full-service multi-channel marketing campaign across print, email, paid media, and organic social media.

**Campaign Cost:** £697.50

**Summary of activity:** Visit Gloucester led the marketing campaign for this Historic England event coordinated in Gloucester by the Festivals & Events and Cathedral Quarter teams. This campaign included a paid media traffic campaign, posters, and leaflets.

**Results:**

Online	
Page views	3,279

Social Media	Impressions	Engagement	Reach
Instagram	8,058	379	5,846
Facebook	278,279	75,494	262,969
Twitter	3,328	176	N/A

**Paid Social results:**

Results	Reach	Impressions	Cost per result
488 Link Clicks	11,981	61,548	£0.41 Per link click

**Hi Street Fest Feedback Survey Results:**





- **100%** of respondents enjoyed the event.
- **33%** of respondents stated that they learnt something new about Gloucester through attending the event.
- **50%** of respondents heard about the event via social media, and 25% via the Visit Gloucester Website
- **58%** of respondents travelled specifically to Gloucester for the event.
- The furthest distance travelled to the event by respondents was **37 miles**, the majority were from GL1-GL5 postcode areas.
- **100%** of respondents would like to see and attend more events like this in Gloucester.

#### 4.6. JULY – AUGUST: #GLOSSUMMERPICS



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Visitor and Resident Seasonal Activation Campaign & Competition

**Service Provided:** Running competition, social media ads, organic social media, email and online.

**Campaign Cost:** £149.79

**Summary of activity:** to celebrate a busy summer across the city and to encourage word-of-mouth self-sharing of attractions, events, and businesses, we ran a photography competition over the summer. Running in six distinct categories, ranging from natural world photography to group photography of visitors out with their families at sunny spots and events, the competition proved to be popular. Each category had a decent prize donated by a Gloucester business.

**Results:**

<b>Online:</b>	
Page views	1,033
Entries submitted	152

<b>Organic Social:</b>	<b>Impressions</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Reach</b>	<b>Link Clicks</b>
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Instagram	4,242	227	3,604	N/A
Facebook	19,657	451	18,325	42
Twitter	2,646	52	N/A	9

#### Paid Social:

Impressions	CPM (cost per 1,000 impressions)	Link clicks	CPC (cost per link click)	CTR (link click-through rate)
1,743	£1.42	5	£0.49	0.29%
75,062	£1.96	442	£0.33	0.59%
<b>76,805</b> Total	<b>£1.95</b> Per 1,000 Impressions	<b>447</b> Total	<b>£0.34</b> Per Action	<b>0.58%</b> Per Impressions

#GlosSummerPics had a strong return on investment, with the co-promoted images shared with us over 150 times. Those images' combined reach, alongside the reach we achieved through organic and paid promotion ensured posts about Gloucester through the summer were seen upwards of 150,000 times. Because this was user-generated content, the generation of that content cost the DMO nothing.

#### 4.7. AUGUST – SEPTEMBER: GLOUCESTER HISTORY FESTIVAL



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4

**Campaign Type:** Major Event Social Media Coverage

**Service Provided:** Content marketing and social media support.

**Campaign cost:** £250

**Summary of activity:** to build up the link between this growing nationally important event and the DMO, Visit Gloucester covered the History Festival on our social media, with Visit Gloucester's Digital Marketing Officer attending several talks, recording reaction, the interviewing some of the festival's high-profile presenters. To support this



activity, we invested in videography kit including mobile sound recording, which is reusable for future supporting campaigns.

### Results:

We published twenty-six posts on behalf of the festival and achieved a combined reach of 40,979 with 1,813 engagements (likes, shares, re-posts, comments, reactions). The platform that performed best was Facebook, which has an older active userbase but performance on both TikTok and Instagram, both with younger users, was solid with room for growth in future festivals. See a detailed breakdown of post performance below.

Instagram Feed	Impressions	Engagement	Reach
<a href="#">26/07/2023</a>	927	45	740
<a href="#">05/08/2023</a>	916	59	866
<a href="#">21/08/2023</a>	937	55	728
<a href="#">01/09/2023</a>	1,116	99	1,048
<a href="#">05/09/2023</a>	1,054	80	1,011
<a href="#">06/09/2023</a>	568	29	525
<a href="#">12/09/2023</a>	1,173	69	1,049

Facebook	Impressions	Engagement	Reach	Link Clicks
<a href="#">26/07/2023</a>	2,833	101	2,504	29
<a href="#">05/08/2023</a>	2,809	73	2,730	27
<a href="#">21/08/2023</a>	4,386	136	3,996	18
<a href="#">01/09/2023</a>	12,130	547	11,728	19
<a href="#">05/09/2023</a>	4,053	165	4,017	25
<a href="#">06/09/2023</a>	1,699	41	1,560	8
<a href="#">12/09/2023</a>	3,985	78	3,941	14

Twitter	Impressions	Engagement	Link Clicks
<a href="#">26/07/2023</a>	683	47	11
<a href="#">05/08/2023</a>	488	23	4
<a href="#">21/08/2023</a>	492	46	3
<a href="#">01/09/2023</a>	370	18	6
<a href="#">05/09/2023</a>	227	7	2
<a href="#">06/09/2023</a>	375	16	2
<a href="#">12/09/2023</a>	416	14	4

TikTok	Views	Engagement
09/09/2023	426	15
09/09/2023	268	7
09/09/2023	148	8
11/09/2023	251	15
12/09/2023	392	20



#### 4.8. JUNE – AUGUST: GLOUCESTER GOES RETRO



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5

**Campaign Type:** Major Event Promotion

**Service Provided:** Full-service multi-channel marketing campaign across print, email, paid media, and organic social media.

**Campaign Budget:** £3000

**Summary of activity:** Visit Gloucester’s key priority event was Gloucester Goes Retro. This is one of Gloucester’s signature events and, despite a sprinkling of rain, this year’s event was bigger than ever, with over 350 classic cars, two live music stages, seventeen individual activations across the city, and an all-new Kings Square programme aimed at young people.

Deploying a significant marketing budget, this all-channel campaign saw a huge upgrade to the Gloucester Goes Retro website, an entirely new set of visitor information including accessibility information for the first time, and all-new on-the-day visitor maps to help visitors and residents find their way to the different zones and events. We ran an extensive social media campaign and created a new way of capturing visitor email sign-ups and feedback.

To maximise return on the expansion of the festival programme, the Visit Gloucester team revamped the marketing, running a large-scale social ads campaign, distributing newly designed flyers, posters, and maps, and revamping the GGR website, as well as PR, reaching national press including The Sun.

We commissioned Paul Nicholls to shoot the event to add to our bank of images for future marketing campaigns, and to records the new focus on family in areas like Kings Square.

#### Results:

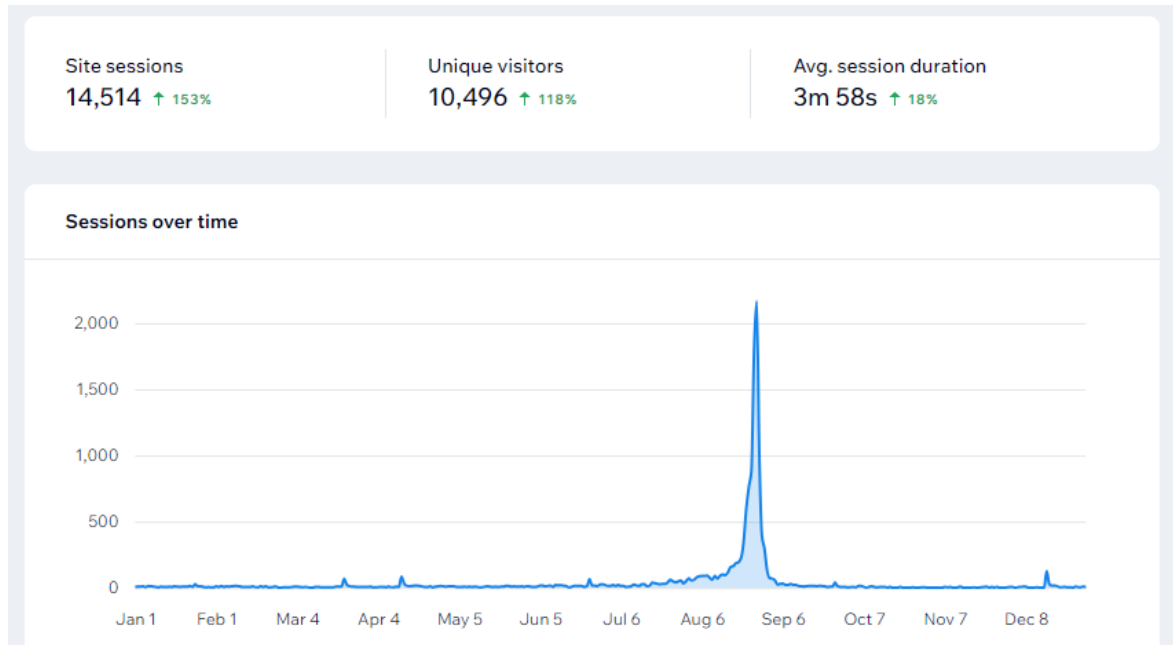
##### 1. Ad Engagement

Campaign	Results	Reach	Impressions	Cost per result
GGR 2023   Visit Gloucester   Awareness	3,190 Estimated ad recall li...	46,871	73,513	£0.03 Per estimated ad rec...
GGR 2023   Visit Gloucester   Traffic #2	5,225 Link Clicks	84,145	225,729	£0.08 Per link click
GGR 2023   Visit Gloucester   Traffic #1	1,405 Link Clicks	26,400	39,772	£0.06 Per link click



We reached over 150k people in the South West and West Country with Meta Ads, and distributed three thousand flyers across the county. The results of our campaign were an exceptionally high engagement and click rate, meaning that our ads were well-targeted at our twin audiences of Families looking for free days out and Car/Vintage Enthusiasts. Our CPC was low, highlighting ad spend was well-invested.

## 2. Web Engagement



Jan 2022-Dec 2022 Website Data (Google Analytics)



Jan 2023 – Dec 2023 Website Data (Google Analytics)

As you can see from the above graphs, the Gloucester Goes Retro website saw a major rise in engagement compared with 2022. We reached over 8,000 more unique visitors to the site, and over 10,000 more site sessions completed, with a significant rise in session duration and engagement. We also saw interest in the site from July right into August. We saw over double the number of visitors to the site on the day of the festival, as they



sought to fill in the feedback survey, and use the enhanced visitor information and digital map we built for this year.

We saw a 25% increase in engagement with website content, a 78% increase in visitors to the website, and twice the use of the website for wayfinding and visitor information on the day of the event.

### 3. Audiences

We developed a new method of capturing audience data for Gloucester Goes Retro, including more obvious calls to join the Visit Gloucester mailing list, a registering interest mini-form for future exhibitor to streamline the process for Festivals & Events, and much more direct signposting to the digital feedback form. The results of this work were:

- 271 newsletter sign-ups (nearly a 10% addition to our mailing list from this single event)
- 60 registered interest in exhibiting in 2024.
- 158 survey respondents

It is worth noting the in-built bias within surveys towards demographics who favour feedback via anonymous survey and according to national trends tend to be older people, who regularly fill out surveys and can often choose the first option in a question. These results and all surveys should be taken as a snapshot of a wider data picture. This being said the survey responses were positive about the event.

- 97.8% said they would come to Retro again.
- 73.9% said they travelled into Gloucester specifically for the event.
- 48.6% were returning attendees.
- 90.6% gave 4/5 or 5/5 in terms of how much they enjoyed the event.
- The favoured elements of the festival included Classic Cars (86.2%), Live Music (47.8%), Retro Dancing (42.8%)

There were also hundreds on feedback comments which the Festivals & Events team will reflect on in the development of the 2024 event.

#### 4.9. OCTOBER – DECEMBER: GLOUCESTER BELIEVES



**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Campaign Type:** Visitor and Resident Seasonal Activation Campaign



**Service Provided:** Full-service marketing campaign across PR, print, email, paid media, and organic social media.

**Campaign Budget:** £7,500

**Summary of activity:** the Christmas campaign for the city in 2023 ties together the large volume of Christmas offers under a single promotional banner of 'Gloucester Believes'. This moniker will be used to flavour the individual elements of the campaign: 'Gloucester Believes in Christmas Treats' for the specific Christmas programme; 'Gloucester Believes in Fab Nights Out with the Fam' for Christmas parties; 'Gloucester Believes in Cosy Cafes and Delicious Dining' for hospitality, etc. We are commissioning a suite of bespoke Christmas illustrative design to adorn the Visit Gloucester website, and to run across paid media and PR. An Electronic Press Kit (EPK) will be provided to partners so they can use the hashtag #GloucesterBelieves and other assets to promote their Christmas offer. We have created a Christmas hub page on our website which will list everything that is on across the city for Christmas and co-promote our partners' offers.

Additionally, this campaign will directly support the marketing of the Festivals & Events winter offer including The Lantern Procession & Christmas Lights Switch-On, and the Bright Nights programme.

**Results:** This campaign is ongoing with a full city-wide launch date of mid-November and will run until January 2024. The result of our consultation with stakeholders is that the umbrella term is popular.

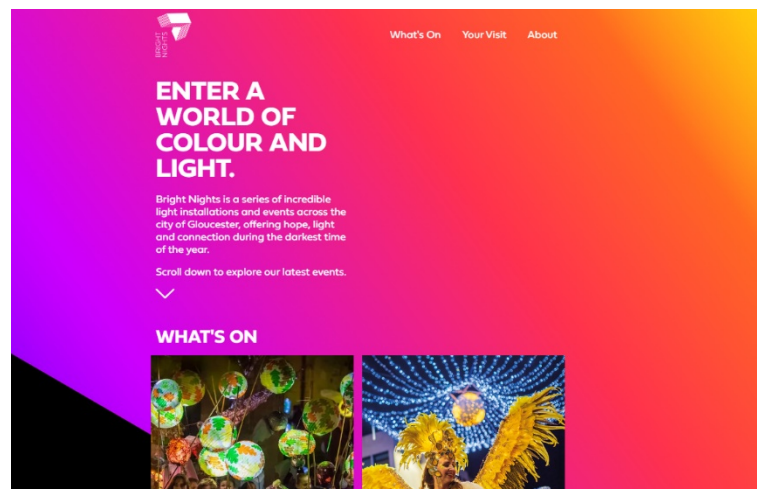
Initial results for the social media campaign (up to 9 Nov) for the Gloucester Lantern Procession and Christmas Lights Switch-On are:

Results	Reach	Impressions	Cost per result
2,138 Link Clicks	28,551	79,970	£0.13 Per link click

It has also been released to local and regional press, and SoGlos is carrying it as an Enhanced Event Preview. We are confident that this campaign will result in significant exposure for the city over the festive period and is already popular.

Visit Gloucester has rebuilt the Bright Nights website in-house, and it is now live at [brightnightsgloucester.co.uk](http://brightnightsgloucester.co.uk). This site is already driving audiences to Bright Nights events with greater efficiency, while being properly designed for mobile and highly Search Engine Optimised.

We will update with full results in January 2024.



## 5. ALWAYS-ON ACTIVITY

Visit Gloucester has a number of always-on channels, ranging from city branding present within the built environment of Gloucester to our permanent digital offer on social media and online. Below is a summary of the activity that Visit Gloucester has run throughout 2023.

### 5.1. B2B EMAIL COMMS

**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 2, 3, 5

**Summary of Activity:** Every two months we send a B2B newsletter to our partners and stakeholders, with current news, events, what's on and industry insights and information. Below is a summary of analytics by send month.

Highlighted in blue, since July, due to changes in Gloucester City Council's DMARC settings, governing the use of our gloucester.gov.uk domain, third-party mailing systems have struggled to not appear as spam in recipients' mailboxes. This has had a major impact on our ability to talk to our business stakeholders and has driven down not only our open rates but our active subscribers. This means we have a below average read rate of 19% which is low in comparison with other local DMOs and lower than the industry average of 26%.

By December, we will have resolved this by using a new mailing system (see section 5.2 below for more) and refreshing our call for businesses to subscribe. We will be moving to monthly B2B newsletters from January 2024.

#### Results:

Month	# Mailing List Subscribers	% Open Rate
February	186	29.67
April	184	22.65
May	182	22.1
July	181	13.64
August	178	11.7
September	162	12

### 5.2. B2C EMAIL COMMS

**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Summary of Activity:** Every month we send a B2C newsletter to people who have subscribed to it. Since January 2023, we have increased our number of subscribers by 50%, and we have an average open rate of 50%.





Starting at approx. 2000 subscribers in January 2023, the Pentana KPI was to take overall consumer newsletter subscribers to 4000 by end of March 2024. By September 2023 we surpassed 3000, so are on track to grow to around 3700 in our target period.

To support mailing list growth, we are in the process of moving our B2C mailing from GovDelivery to MailMinder (part of SimpleView, which powers the Visit Gloucester Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)). This will enable tighter integration between those customers who sign up to take advantage of our build-your-own itinerary system and those who wish to join our mailing list. Once this integration completes, this will grow our mailing list immediately by approximately three hundred subscribers.

We are also going to launch a mailing list sign-up when we put Tall Ships 2024 on sale, and when we replatform the Bright Nights website, which should boost the subscriber rate and could help us exceed our annual target. When we launched the mailing list sign-up route through the Gloucester Goes Retro website, we gained 271 mailing list subscribers.

Our open rate is encouraging, though there is work to do both on data cleansing and on content improvement to see our open rate go even further.

**Results:**

Month	# Mailing List Subscribers	% Open Rate
February	2,245	50%
March	2,407	51%
April	2,418	54%
May	2,510	52%
June	2,653	50%
July	2,659	50%
August	2,849	50%
September	3,042	49%
October	3,134	48%

**5.3. WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS**

**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**Summary of Activity:** the team have undertaken an analysis of the usability, accessibility and mobile optimisation of the Visit Gloucester website this year and initiated a review of all product listings and content across all pages.

The results of this analysis show that the current website is non-compliant with WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards, is hard to navigate with poor search and displays incorrectly on tablets and mobile devices. Additionally, it is not easy to surface business information in dynamic ways and the What’s On events guide is poorly laid out. This has had a noticeably detrimental effect on user numbers and engagement. Most users use mobile-friendly versions of sites, so it is critical that we look to fix this.



We have therefore initiated a project to rebuild the content, structure, and Content Management System (CMS) for the site to address these deficiencies.

The website was built in 2020-2021. It has had no further back-end development for nearly three years. It is the right time to replatform the website. SimpleView, the Visit Gloucester web provider has launched a new CMS which is set to address the issues raised, and the team are now laying the foundations for a rebuild project in Q4 of the 2023-24 financial year, to launch in April 2024.

As part of this rebuild project, the new CRM/Ticketing solution for Cultural Services, TicketSolve, will be integrated so customers can purchase tickets for City Council Festivals & Events right inside Visit Gloucester's website.

Ahead of this build, we have performed several improvements to the existing website:

- The homepage now carries a properly place-branded carousel of high-profile features to guide visitors to the big things that we are promoting.
- Disused and redundant pages have been archived.
- The navigation of the site has been streamlined to make it easy to find things within categories of 'Do,' 'Stay,' 'What's On,' and 'Discover.'
- The team have updated over 50% of the business listings and product pages with new copy, higher quality images.
- We have launched a new digital form for business to onboard, replacing a cumbersome Word document-based system.
- We have replatformed our mailing from GovDelivery to MailMinder (provided by SimpleView) which enables us to better understand what customers are doing on our website and how it relates to email marketing.
- We have published forty blogs in 9 months, averaging at least one per week, featuring everything from heritage interest stories to What's On roundups to guides and listicles, to exclusive announcements.
- We have streamlined our Business Support pages ahead of creating a Members-Only area, encouraging businesses to sign up with us to access data, research, and member benefits.

## Other Web Properties

We have also focused on a strategy of improving the other web properties we run, including the Gloucester Goes Retro, Tall Ships and Bright Nights websites, as well as Film Gloucester and Meet in Gloucester. This is so that we can access audience segments who may not find the Visit Gloucester website and capture them onto the Visit Gloucester mailing lists and push them to our social channels.

The team have started replatforming and upgrading these sites with new content and better Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), and the results for our first completed site, Retro, has been transformative (see section 4.8 for results). The next sites to go live are Bright Nights (which went live 1 Nov 2023) and Tall Ships later in November this year, with Film and Meet following in 2024. The combined effect of these sites working as part of a network of sites means the total number of potential site visitors to all our properties should increase, as will our overall web footprint.

## Visit Gloucester Results:

We've had a solid set of results in usage data for the first 10 months of 2023, attracting 271k users, 561k page views and 1.8m web events (including page views, user engagements, beginning a web session).

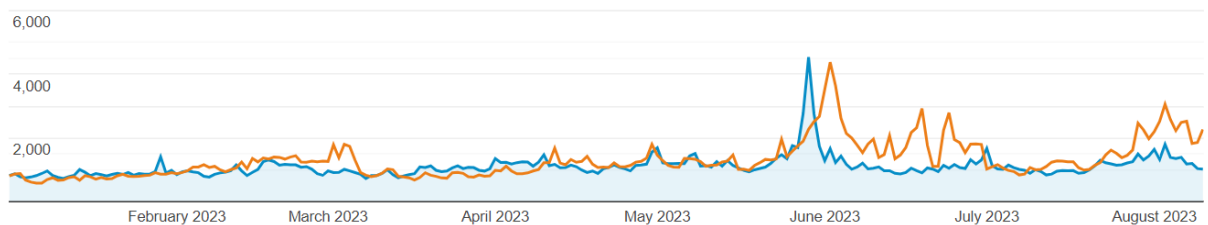


The below graph is from Google Universal Analytics on visitor numbers, which has subsequently been replaced by Google Analytics 4, which is why the comparison is only until September, at which point analytics switched over. There is a second graph from GA4 for the period Sep-Oct.

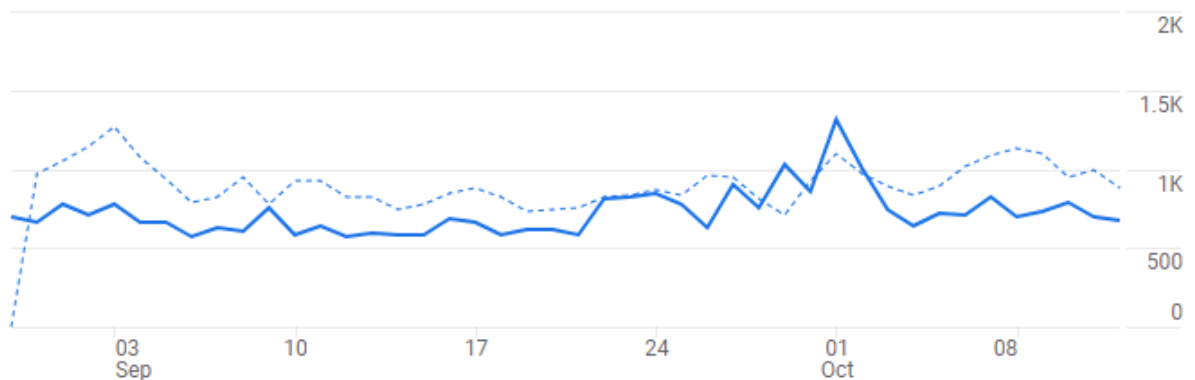
The numbers show a broadly comparable pattern of interest and usage between 2022 and 2023, though with two points of reduction in overall numbers centred on two periods:

The dip across June and July in 2023 was as a result of a much scaled-back summer campaign compared with 2022. The budget scale of #GlosSummerPics (see section 4.6) during these months was nowhere near the £80k Visit England-sponsored 'Escape the Everyday' campaign run over this period in 2022. We will be looking at how we can increase the seasonal campaign spend for this period in 2024 so redress the balance.

Where there is an additional surge in activity in August 2022 for Gloucester Goes Retro, the 2023 campaign directed visitors to Retro's own website this instead of the Visit Gloucester referral page, so this activity can be seen in the web stats for Retro's website (see section 4.8 above for results).



The period for Sep-Oct (below) shows that user numbers are again broadly comparable, though slightly down on the same period last year.



While these numbers are comparable to the previous year, it is important that we maximise the use of our website and capitalise on our Search position as a go-to site for information about Gloucester. The rebuild of the website should increase user numbers in the next year.

#### 5.4. SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

**Destination Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

**Summary of Activity:** We currently manage six social media channels for Visit Gloucester:

- Facebook
- Instagram



- Twitter (now known as X)
- TikTok
- LinkedIn – Created this year.
- Threads – Created this year.

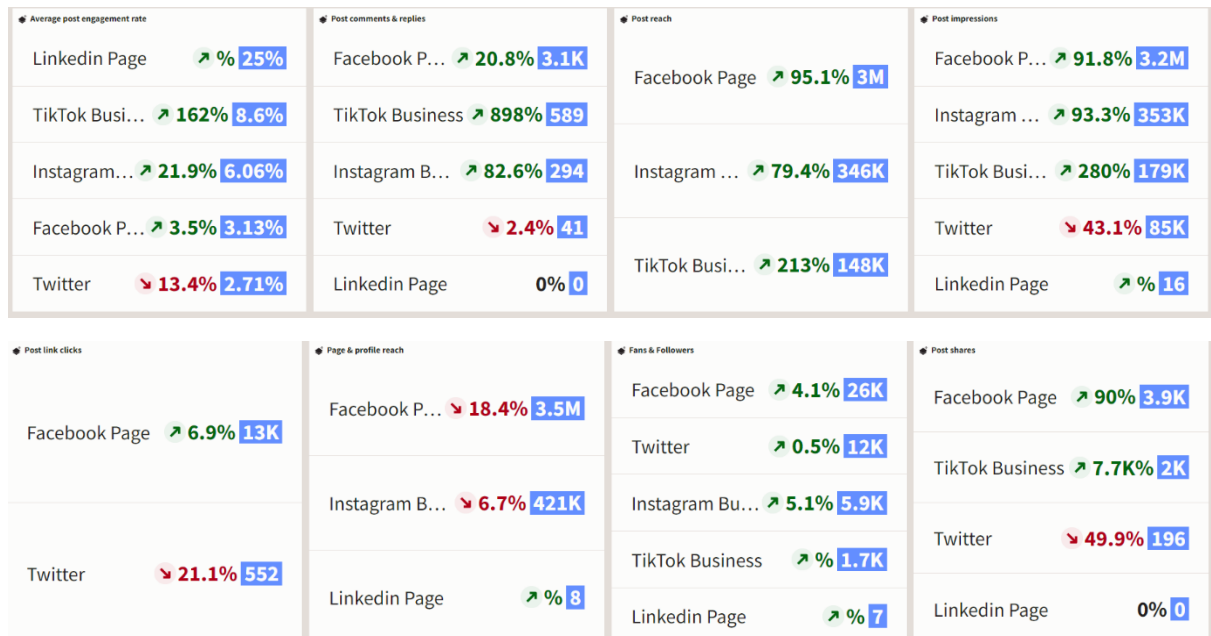
All of these channels have experienced growth in followers so far this year (Jan-Oct 2023), with Instagram experiencing the largest increase (up 5.1% compared to Jan - Oct 2022). We have also had excellent engagement on all posts (see results below), although Twitter/X remains low.

TikTok has performed excellently compared to last year. Engagement started off slowly following the creation of the account, but in January this year, we had our first viral video which pushed our follower count over 1,000. Currently this video has gained 49.6K views, 4,404 likes, 108 comments, 264 favourites, and has been shared 732 times and engagement is still slowly climbing eight months after posting. Since then, we have had three other videos go viral and all non-viral videos gain an average of 1,000 views.

Threads is a new account we created this year. The app launched in July as Meta’s competitor to Twitter/X. Since July we have gained 777 followers. Engagement is low on the posts, but it is still a new channel and as more people adopt it, reach and engagement should increase.

Popular content this year included Gloucester Goes Retro, Hi! Street Fest, The Three Choirs Festival, The Knife Angel, Hopewell Street, and Cathedral Tours.

### Results:



Jan-Oct 2023 compared to Jan-Oct 2022

Across all social media platforms on nearly all metrics, aside from Twitter/X, Visit Gloucester’s reach, engagement, impressions, and clicks are up year-on-year from 2022. This robust growth means that we are reaching far more people than in previous years, and directly connecting them with more attractions and events on the ground in Gloucester.



**A note on Twitter/X:** Since acquisition by Elon Musk in 2022, Twitter/X has become a more politically sensitive platform, with a reported rise in incidences of hate speech, cyber-bullying, and online abuse. Advertising on this platform currently represents a reputational risk to Gloucester City Council. While it is unclear what procedures are in place at Twitter/X to counter bad behaviour on this platform, Visit Gloucester is deprioritising its use for organic messaging, and will prioritise advertising spending on other social platforms.

## 5.5. CITY BRANDING ADOPTION



**Strategic Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 2, 3, 5

**Summary of Activity:** Following the city branding exercise run by consultancy Thinking Place over 2021 and 2022, a set of assets and a toolkit was produced to enable businesses in the visitor economy, attractions, events and other place-based enterprises and experiences to brand themselves in a way that shouts 'Gloucester'.

Encouraging the adoption of the place branding by individual businesses has proved time consuming and confusing for many business owners, and feedback from partners was that the multi-coloured assets are hard to apply alongside their own brands and designs.

This year we have reimagined how the roll-out will be approached, through demonstration of the Place Branding across all output from Visit Gloucester.

**We have:**

- Adopted the branding as the brand for Visit Gloucester and redeveloped the Visit Gloucester logo in line with it.
- Created a new design direction for the Visit Gloucester website which adopts the typefaces, lead brand colours and graphics – to be rolled out fully in our website rebuild project next year, but visible in the approach to navigation tiles and the leader images on main site pages.
- Applied it to all Visit Gloucester documents and presentations.
- Created a Visit Gloucester animated video sting that runs on our social media videos and on any event trailers we commission.
- Introduced the brand onto map signs throughout the city centre and on generic arterial route flags.
- Piloted a vinyl skin for long-term empty retail space in the city centre (pictured) heavily featuring the branding.
- Started a conversation with the wayfinding team working on the Gloucestershire Cycle Spine project about implementing the branding on city centre signage for



that project from Northgate Street to Southgate Street, and whether there is scope for expansion of that project to bring the brand to more signage across the centre.

- Rebranded our social media channels to carry the place branding-based Visit Gloucester logo.
- Committed to roll out the place branding on all tourism-related print and maps.
- We are evaluating the potential impact of the designs we currently have on neurodiverse and colour-blind people with a view to calming the design down and increasing visual accessibility.

For partners, we have ensured that the assets and toolkit provided by Thinking Place are still available with guidance on how to apply it, and we are looking at simplifying partners' interaction with the Place Branding so it is more easily applied and providing them with place-branded printed assets they can use. These assets will include a welcome pack featuring a 'member of Visit Gloucester' window sticker so they can show their business is part of the visitor economy without having to adapt their brand. We hope this would increase adoption. Everything can be accessed [here](#).

## 5.6. DEVELOPING COTSWOLDS PLUS - LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP (LVEP)

**Strategic Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objective 1, 3, 5, 6

**Context:** Following the publication of the [De Bois report](#) reviewing the structure of Tourism and Destination Management across England, DCMS has agreed with Visit England/Visit Britain to structure DMOs in three tiers. Previously it was complex for Visit England to interact with the many hundreds of accredited and non-accredited tourism organisations across the county, and the new structure now recognises DMOs in three tiers:

- **Tier 1:** Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs): the 15-20 organisations in this tier will provide broad tourism support for a large area of the country receiving central government funding. The first DDP is being tested in a pilot project in the North East of England.
- **Tier 2:** Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs): the approx. forty organisations in this tier are DMOs or DMO collective groups that will be accredited by Visit England/Visit Britain (VE/VB) and who will receive direct support, and access to VE/VB funding pots. This will be the tier in which VE/VB will do its liaison with tourism organisations across the country.
- **Tier 3:** other non-accredited DMOs. Tourism organisations who are not part of an accredited DDP or LVEP will receive no direct support from or access to VE/VB or DCMS. This does not mean a DMO cannot operate, but does mean that tourism-focused funding, training, and other means of support may not be easily available.

**Summary:** A major project for 2023, Visit Gloucester has heavily contributed to the formation of the new Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). This is so far the only collective LVEP, built on the strengths of a number of neighbouring DMOs, and is being considered a pathfinder project by Visit England/Visit Britain so other potential collective LVEPs may benefit from our collaborative model.

Gloucester City Council has been working alongside DMO colleagues in our neighbouring districts for many years. The informal partnership has been delivering joined-up thinking on marketing best practice, as well as joint approaches to itinerary



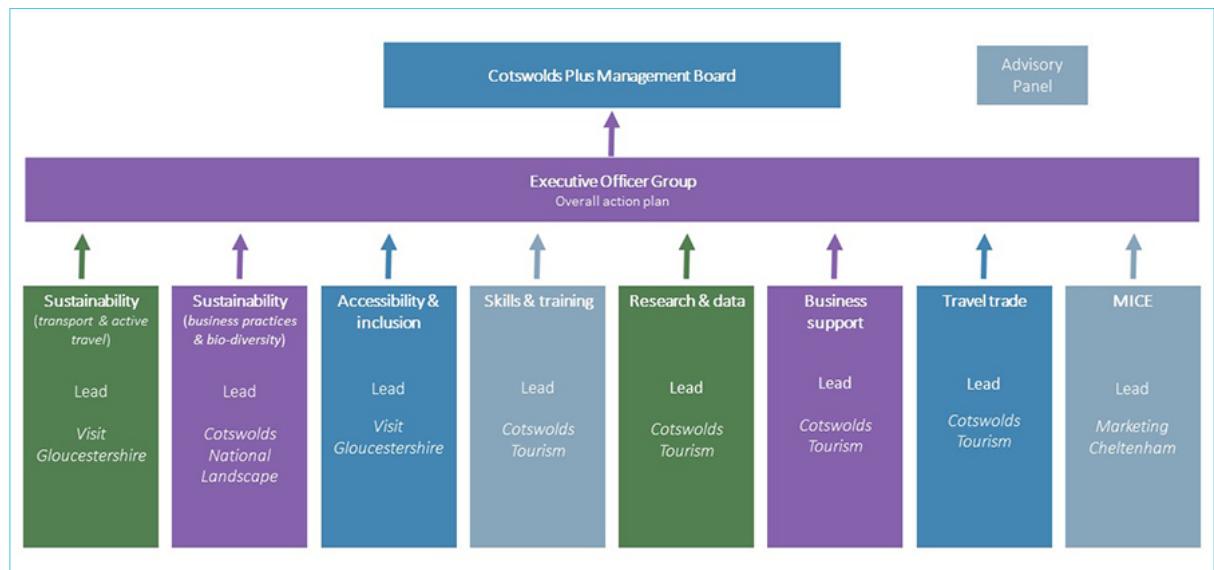
building, travel trade organisation and support for businesses and events across the county and region.

Building on the informal partnership between DMOs, these organisations have come together to bid to become a Tier 2 LVEP and we are pleased to say that Cotswolds Plus has been officially accredited by VE/VB as the LVEP covering Gloucestershire and the Cotswold National Landscape (formerly AONB).

Cotswolds Plus is made up of Visit Gloucester, Marketing Cheltenham, Cotswolds Tourism, Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism, and Visit Gloucestershire, with partners Cotswolds National Landscape, the local authorities and county council for Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire District Council. Cotswolds Tourism acts as the lead DMO in the partnership as it is the largest with the most well-established links to travel trade and international markets.

As a core partner, the LVEP will enable Visit Gloucester to help shape the approach to the visitor economy over a much wider area, and more easily voice the tourism needs of an urban centre in a predominantly rural tourism economy. It unlocks links into the Cotswolds visitor economy which brings one of the world’s most valuable tourism brands even closer to the city - the visitor economy of Gloucestershire including the Cotswolds is worth £966m per year.

It is important to note that the LVEP does not deliver marketing, but rather helps combine the resources of the DMO partners to enable deeper collaboration across eight workstreams including:



Collaboration on these workstreams will bring major cross-over benefits like more international representation in the travel trade for Gloucester businesses, a joined-up and standardised approach to data and business support, as well as greater access to upskilling and training for DMO staff across the partnership.

It is still up to individual DMO partners to market the events, businesses and attractions of their individual areas and districts, and partners are free to choose the marketing priorities. This means that no work that the LVEP undertakes will supersede the Strategic Marketing Plan for Destination Marketing at Gloucester City Council.

**Results:**



- The LVEP application was praised by Visit England as an exemplar of collaboration.
- The Executive Officer Group has met four times since accreditation in July, with the Management Board meeting twice.
- The Executive Officer Group has run a successful away day and formulated a set of LVEP operating principles that guide the eight workstream activity plans to ensure alignment across partners.
- Visit Gloucester is a financial and in-kind contributor to the LVEP.
- Visit Gloucester co-leads on the Research & Data and Business Support workstreams, looking at standardising of business support signposting and business engagement, as well as the implementation of agreed standards in data reporting across the partnership area.
- Philip Walker, Head of Culture, sits on the Management Board of the LVEP and Jack Fayter, Tourism & Destination Marketing Manager on the Executive Officer Group.
- The LVEP has already enabled closer working within the staff teams of the core partners.
- The LVEP has committed to producing a Tourism Forum in English Tourism Week where we can leverage the combined reach of the partners to introduce Gloucester to a wider network of businesses and travel trade.

## 5.7.A LOOK AT ANNUAL FOOTFALL DATA

### **Strategic Marketing Plan Alignment:** Objectives 1, 3, 5

Summary: We work with Place Informatics to collect city centre footfall data to help us understand trends in the movement of people across Gloucester and the concentrations of people across the year. 2023 has shown solid growth in footfall compared to 2022, as a result of many of the campaigns and always-on work above, positive press about Gloucester as a Priority Place for Culture, a key area for inward investment and an exciting destination full of promise as exemplified by the multiple major developments taking place across the city.

#### **Data Disclaimer:**

1. The footfall data is *indicative* data, rather than actual. We do not have footfall counters across the city, rather TownandPlace.AI (our data company) use aggregated phone mast and GPS data to determine footfall movement. It measures how populations move through places. We can generate heatmaps that show concentrations of movement in Gloucester as a proportion of total footfall, but the absolute numbers generated by the data company may be over or underestimates.
2. There are many factors that can affect the data including how people use their phones, the age of their phones, and the demographic of the population at an event (older and younger people may not have phones).
3. Because the readout is based on movement between attractions, we can heatmap the streets leading to locations but not the specific location itself. It can also count individuals multiple times as they move between places.
4. The footfall data is uploaded 6-8 weeks in arrears, so we currently have data for up to August 2023.





- When we deploy footfall data, we do so in a context of other data including survey data and sales data where available, to give us a more nuanced picture.

Results:

Year on Year Footfall												
Location	Jan-22	Jan-23	Variance	Feb-22	Feb-23	Variance	Mar-22	Mar-23	Variance	Apr-22	Apr-23	Variance
Gloucester	1,470,412	1,792,153	+21.88%	1,519,584	1,626,128	+7.01%	1,587,911	1,772,225	+11.61%	1,678,236	1,714,734	+2.17%

May-22	May-23	Variance	Jun-22	Jun-23	Variance	Jul-22	Jul-23	Variance
1,744,294	1,732,964	-0.65%	1,732,123	1,758,971	+1.55%	1,777,234	1,783,597	+0.36%

In the year-on-year data comparison, we can see strong growth in all months, especially during the first four months of the year. The footfall was broadly comparable in May despite not having Gloucester Tall Ships this year and the quietening effect of community-focused events in wards celebrating the Coronation. Summer showed continuing growth.

Summary					
The figures show footfall growth for 2023 vs 2019 and corresponding month-on-month growth for 2023					
Location	May 23 v 19	Jun 23 v 19	Jul 23 v 19	May 23 to Jun 23	Jun 23 to Jul 23
Gloucester	-10.53%	-10.28%	-8.06%	+1.5%	+1.4%
South West	-0.76%	+3.99%	-2.59%	+3.66%	-2.02%
UK	-4.11%	-3.13%	-5.46%	+0.71%	-2.69%

These figures show the comparison between the pre-Pandemic figures and the Month-on-Month figures, and how we relate to our wider regions.

This picture is more mixed, showing that while we are strongly recovering each year compared to the preceding year, footfall is down by up to 10% compared to 2019 levels. There are macro-economic factors and social trends that are worth noting in relation to this, including:

- The cost-of-living crisis affecting consumers ability to travel into the centre, to shop for leisure, to dine out or go to night-time economy venues or afford paid-for cultural activities.
- Competition for residents' disposable income from out-of-town destinations in Gloucester not covered by the data.
- Competition from nearby visitor economy destinations. You can see that the data for the South West regionally is higher with Gloucester residents and inbound audiences being tempted by our neighbours.
- Competition with at-home entertainment from gaming to streamed entertainment.
- Demographic change in consumers with the city centre retail offer no longer matching the desires of modern consumers.

With our current average rate of footfall growth standing at 6.27% on current performance we will return to pre-pandemic levels by January 2026. With Tall Ships



Festival returning in 2024, we could receive a significant boost to footfall in May 2024, which may hasten the overall recovery.



## 6. OBJECTIVES FOR 2024

As we commence the detailed work on the Destination Marketing Plan for 2024, it has become clear that the draft objectives set in 2022 do not perfectly articulate the work we need to do going forward to support the Visitor Economy. Now that the LVEP has been setup, a new website for Visit Gloucester is being commissioned, campaigning around sustainability is being adapted into a general approach, and the needs to widen our footprint with the business community and more directly support marketing of the Culture Portfolio have become clearer, we are proposing clarified wording to our objectives for the year ahead:

### **Objectives:**

1. Continue to work on rebuilding Gloucester's core inbound audiences to pre-Pandemic levels.
2. Fully embed the use of Gloucester's Place Branding through full adoption by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), Visit Gloucester, across all channels.
3. Ensure that Visit Gloucester is a central partner of the newly proposed Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for our region.
4. Support the growth of Gloucester's Visitor Economy through the provision of signposting and digital business support.
5. Grow Gloucester's twin domestic audiences (visitors and residents) through enhanced engagement across all digital channels.
6. Embed sustainability messaging across all our published output.
7. Directly support the marketing of major city Festivals & Events, either through direct or commissioned delivery.

See section 3 of this report to see the objectives for 2023.



## 7. 2024 ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Building on the work completed in 2023, and summarised in this report, and based on the objectives for 2024 above, this is the headline campaigning and project activity Visit Gloucester will be delivering in 2024.

	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Major Campaigns</b>	<b>Event Marketing</b>
<b>Jan-Mar (Q3 23)</b>	VG Website rebuild. New tourism printed materials. English Tourism Week	Summer Campaign Focus on Food Dock	Tall Ships Festival Marketing & Ticketing
<b>Apr-Jun (Q1 24)</b>	Business network expansion VG member recruitment drive	New Core Inbound Tourism Campaign	Summer Cultural Events & Gloucester Goes Retro
<b>Jul-Sep (Q2 24)</b>	Multi-year Destination Marketing Plan (DMP) created, alongside LVEP, to replace Marketing Gloucester's former Visitor Economy Strategy	Christmas Campaign (Glosty the Snowman)	Autumn/Halloween Events
<b>Oct-Nov (Q3 24)</b>	Business 'Meet your DMO' drop-in event. Destination Ambassador Scheme launched	Spring/Summer 25	Christmas Events, including Lantern Procession, Bright Nights.

