

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Marion Atkinson	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	September 2023
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INVEST SEFTON

External funded programmes

Growth Hub

InvestSefton is one of the Liverpool City Region Growth Hubs working alongside the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (CA), Growth Platform, other local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and The Women's Organisation. The total value for delivery in each of the LA areas is £20,000 compared to the £50,000 of previous years. **Government has announced that Growth Hub funding has been extended until September 2023. InvestSefton will continue the delivery of the Sefton growth hub.**

ERDF Business Growth Programme (BGP) In Sefton, Growth Hub activity is merged with the ERDF Business Growth Programme (BGP) to help provide a more cohesive service to businesses. The team is focussed on supporting business growth and new job growth through business advice, diagnostics, and brokerage.

The team has submitted its final expenditure claim up to 30th June which includes the following performance outturn:

Output	Target -June 2023	Actual	% variance
C1 Businesses receiving support	460	445	-3.26
C5 New businesses supported	72	72	0
C8 Jobs created	309	336.16	+8.79

The team met its C5 target and surpassed its C8 targets and was within the 5% EU tolerance rate set for the programme which was reviewed to take account of the economic downturn during the Covid-19 pandemic.

UKSPF Shared Prosperity Funding

Place Based Business Support- Sefton's allocation is £782,414, which includes c.£23k top-sliced monies for central co-ordination and website development via Growth Platform.

Business Start-up support- This will now be delivered by the Place Based Business Support programme. InvestSefton is to commission support for start-ups via competitive

tender for a £80,000 contract, an extract from the Request for Quotation (RfQ) is shown below:

The commissioned service will include activities to support the establishment of new business start-ups in any sector and from a wide range of legal entities that include sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, and social enterprises. New businesses that have been trading for up to 12 months will also be eligible for support.

The requirements of this commission are to:

- *Provide 1:1 information, advice and guidance to individuals and businesses who meet the specified criteria (to be defined)*
- *Provide a programme of events and workshops including a structured programme and additional themed workshops focusing on specific sectors.*
- *Establish networking groups for newly formed businesses*
- *Provide business support to newly trading businesses (less than 12 months) to ensure that they are embedded in the local economy and achieve greater survival rates*
- *Manage the referral of all individuals who start a business to InvestSefton*

Both the commissioned supplier and businesses assisted will be expected (where applicable) to sign up to and participate in Sefton's Caring Business Charter. Special consideration should be given to how the service will target people in protected characteristics groups including ethnic minorities, disabled people and women. NB. All activity is to be delivered in a range of locations across the borough to be agreed with InvestSefton including key town centres.

Town Centres business support-Similarly, the team is also going to market for a business support sustainability commission worth £60,000. An extract from the RFQ is shown below:

Specific support will be made available to businesses in key town centre locations, including (but not restricted to) Bootle, Crosby, Maghull and Southport. In essence, the Council is looking to support the sustainability of businesses through direct 1:1 support.

The benefits of sustainability are wide reaching. According to the World Economic Forum, businesses are faced with increasing pressure to integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting into their practices and business models. The pressure comes from multiple stakeholders. A 2022 poll showed that 88% of institutional investors put ESG on par with operational and financial considerations when making investment decisions; 60% of employees choose a place to work based on their beliefs and values, while 58% of consumers buy or advocate for brands that match their beliefs. (Edelman Trust Barometer)

*[*Harnessing power of SMEs can shape the future of sustainability | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org)*

Sustainability can also help businesses to improve operational efficiency and reduce their costs, leading to increased profits and growth.

The requirements of this commission are:

- *Delivery of activities including events, workshops and 1:1 advice and support that raise awareness and understanding of sustainability, offer practical advice and guidance on how to become more sustainable and the development of a sustainability policy and action plan.*

- *Delivery of activities including the following (but not limited to) themes; carbon footprint reduction, buying local, reducing energy consumption, reducing energy costs and waste minimisation.*
- *At the end of the support each business that has participated will have a sustainability policy and action plan in place.*
- *Supported businesses will take part in marketing campaigns that showcase how they have become more sustainable.*

While there are no restrictions on location, it is envisaged that this support will be delivered to clusters of businesses from the following town centres, Bootle, Crosby, Maghull and Southport with the business cohort coming predominantly from the following types of businesses:

- *Accommodation providers*
- *Cafes, Bars and restaurants*
- *Independent Retailers*

The supplier will work in partnership with InvestSefton to deliver engagement activities, raise awareness and interest in the programme and identification of businesses that are suitable for support.

Both the commissioned supplier and businesses assisted will be expected (where applicable) to sign up to and participate in Sefton's Caring Business Charter.

NB. While there is no restriction on location, priority will be given to Southport, Bootle, Maghull and Crosby town centres.

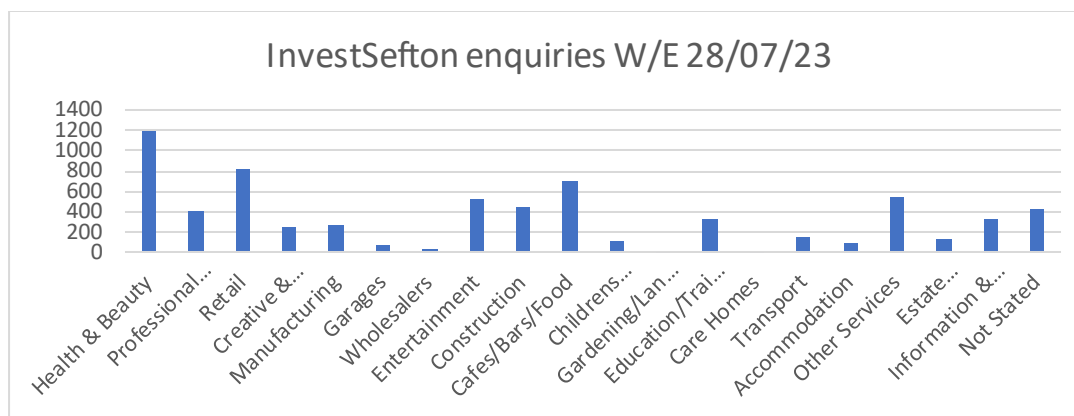
The closing date for both tenders is 22 August 2023, selection will take place during September with a view to having appointments for an October 2023 start.

Business engagement Website

- From Friday 21st July to Thursday 27th July 2023, the website had 126 unique sessions
- The most visits this week was on Tuesday 25th July.
- Since the new website went live on Monday 30th March 2020 until Thursday 27th July 2023, the site has had a total of **68,633** unique sessions.
- Posts on the website and twitter this week have included promoting the recruitment to the cluster boards for the LCR Combined Authority Business & Enterprise Board, also promoting the new cohorts for the Help to Grow Programme from the University of Liverpool Management School.
- InvestSefton twitter page has 1613 followers
- The Sefton Huddle Facebook page has 23 members.

Business enquiries

Since March 2020 InvestSefton has handled 6,911 enquiries from a wide range of businesses. Breakdown by type of business is provided as of 28 July 2023:



Total enquiry numbers from 13th March to date:

Year	Total Enquiries
13 th March 2020- 31 st March 21	3740
1 st April 21- 31 st March 22	1325
1 st April 22- 31 st March 23	1413
1 st April 23 – to date	433
Total	6,911

Case studies

The team continues to engage with businesses as part of its 1:1 delivery support. Recent anonymised case studies below:

Electrical contractors based in Maghull and specialise in solar panels as well as undertaking general electrical works both commercial and domestic. The business plans to establish themselves in the Northwest and North Wales for solar panel installations and battery storage, working with an increasing number of developers and local councils through tender opportunities. InvestSefton supported the business by undertaking a website audit and content review to improve the customer experience when visiting the website and to enable the business to provide a clear message of the services it provides.

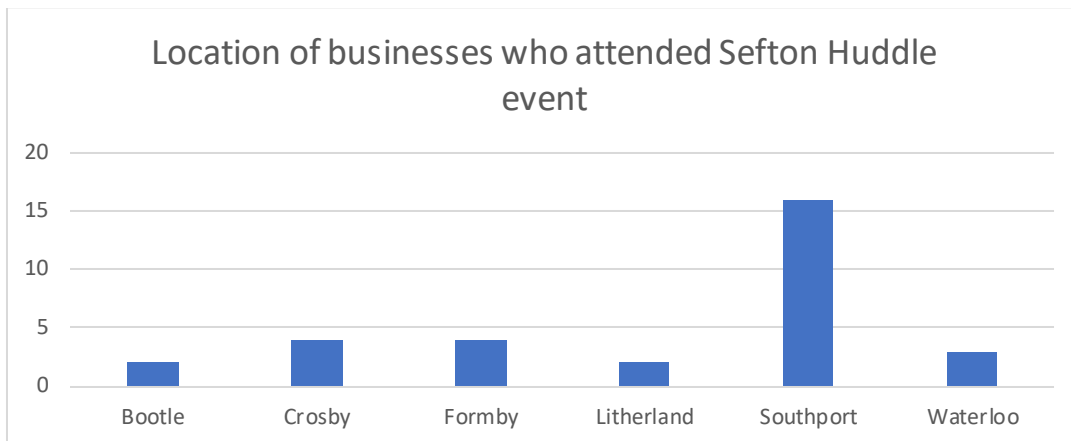
Property Management & Property Service business based in Southport. The business works with private investors looking to make money in the short and longer term. This includes renovating and refurbishing large period properties for resale. The business is Growth orientated and is looking to expand its services for landlords by working with Eco Energy schemes to implement works that will make the premises more attractive for resale/rental. InvestSefton Programme supported the business by researching Eco Energy schemes and helping the business to develop a Net Zero plan.

Chauffeur driven limousine and prestige vehicle hire business based in Aintree. The business has been trading for 20 years and provide services for wedding, airport transfers and corporate clients, as well as prom nights for schools. The business is looking to supplement its services with minibuses which will be used for school contracts. They are also looking to apply for an Eco Stars fleet recognition accreditation. InvestSefton assisted the business with the process of tendering and bidding for schools' contracts as well as supporting them with the application for Eco Stars fleet management for a green fleet accreditation.

Webinars/Events

InvestSefton's webinars and events have become a useful vehicle for engaging with businesses on a one-to-many basis. The most recent event was Sefton Huddle-the digital and technological business forum which met for the second time on 29th June at Marine Football Club.

Presentations included an update on business support for digital and tech Sefton businesses and a presentation from Innovate UK EDGE on AI, Chat GPT and raising funding in the creative sector and tackling cybercrime. A total of 31 businesses attended (35 delegates) of which 9 were women business owners.



Feedback included:

“Great and valuable event as always, met lots of new people and the speakers were highly informative. Unmissable event and thanks for continuing to support and champion the DCT sector in Sefton.”

“Back to basics in marketing and GDPR and trends. Lovely to work with your team – yet again! Thank you for this opportunity”

“Great talks, information delivered in short but informative presentations”

Businesses were also asked how they would like to develop the group and ideas included 'speed networking meetings and engaging more women through various specialist groups/networks. The team has also set up a Facebook group called Sefton Huddle and 23 members have already joined.



The Cyber resilience presentation has also led to two new workshops both from 10am-12pm with networking from 9.30am on:

-Weds 20th September, The Lake House Waterloo

- Thursday 21st September, Formby Hall

REGENERATION : GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Regeneration Service continue to lead and support the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme for Sefton by helping to deliver a number of key Council priority projects across Sefton including external partner projects. In addition, the team help to manage the monitoring for a number of externally funded capital projects.

The current status of these projects is included below:

BOOTLE

Bootle Town Centre

The Council is progressing plans for next phase of re-purposed Strand Shopping Centre and including use of the Salt n Tar Canalside event space established in Bootle.

- The Salt and Tar Music Weekend event took place between the 7th and 9th July 2023
- The Event was the first major event to take place on Salt and Tar, even though the site was not 100% complete. The event was deemed as a major success attracting over 6,000 people over the weekend, visitors came from all over the region with many coming from Bootle, Sefton, Liverpool City Region and much further such as Cumbria.
- Due to the high profile of the event the social media interaction on the salt and tar channels grew rapidly leading up to and during the event. Also, many of the visitors from outside The City Region had not been to Bootle before, this demonstrates the power of events to attract and change perception.
- The weekends weather was extremely unsettled for the Saturday and Sunday, the event health and safety team made decisions on both days to delay gates opening to ensure that it could go ahead safety. The rain did cause around 10% of ticket holders not to attend.

Strand Transformation Programme

- Following consideration by Sefton Cabinet in May to accept DLUHC capital levelling up funding of £20M for Bootle Strand, work is progressing at pace to develop the first phase of the Strand repurposing.
- The Council will consider late this year the next stage of work involving selective demolition and detailed designs for phase 1 implementation programme. A number of statutory approvals will be required to support delivery and work is progressing to be able to secure the necessary approvals for these currently, with a view to commencing partial demolition work early in 2024.
- A communication and engagement plan are also being developed to support the programme and share the project with key stakeholders including those directly affected and those who currently use the Strand. A unit within the Strand is to be

used for engagement and information sharing on the project as it progresses in addition to media updates and formal consultation stages.

- Discussions with highways and public protection regarding the Strand service road are also progressing for any potential road closures required to enable the demolition works in phase 1 to commence in early 2024.

SOUTHPORT

Southport Town Deal

- Work is ongoing in delivering the Southport Town Deal programme in accordance with the approved business cases agreed with the Towns Fund in 2022.

Marine Lake Events Centre

- The largest and most significant project in the programme is the £73M Marine Lake Events Centre and Water and Light show. Following planning approval granted in April 2023, Keir construction have been appointed as the main contractor for the site demolition and enabling work which started in Aug 2023.
- Key historic items such as lighting, dance floor and art deco panels have already been safely removed to be used in MLEC.
- Once demolition and enabling works are complete the main works will commence, this is planned for spring 2024.

The Enterprise Arcade, Southport

- Refurbishment of Crown Buildings in Southport's town centre for a new business hub is a key Town Deal project. This will be the first ever purpose-built workspaces for start-up creative and digital businesses in Southport and forms part of the Southport Town Deal.
- Design work is finalised for the construction contract and work tendered on the Chest this summer 2023. Tenders are currently being evaluated with the intention of finalising assessment of submission by the end of September 2023 and starting on site later this year.

Les Transformation de Southport

- The first phase of transportation improvements, focussing on the area around Southport Market – Kings Street, Market Street, East Bank Street.
- Market Street and Eastbank Street is programmed for delivery later in 2023 and early 2024. This exciting project should help transform this area of the town centre and set the standard for other improvements. The programme of work is intended to avoid seasonal disruption.

Building a Better Customer Experience

- New learning modules have now been developed by Southport College and have been rolled out amongst existing and new learners.
- The pilot of the Building Better Customer Experience Training with Southport College has now been completed, in total 68 learners participated in the pilot including existing learners currently enrolled at the college and employees of a local business. The feedback received during and after the pilot programme was exceptionally positive and Southport College are now proposing to roll the course out to larger cohorts to meet demand. Training for volunteers and workless people through Sefton's Adult & Community Learning service is also proposed as part of this pilot programme.

CROSBY

Crosby Town Centre Regeneration

Crosby New and Existing Library at Waterloo

- Sefton Council has announced it is pursuing the futures of both Crosby Village and Waterloo Library as two separate schemes in August 2023.
- Sefton Council is committed to helping secure a successful and robust future for Crosby Village and in addition the Council's Cabinet has given consideration as to how refurbishment of the existing Library in Waterloo can be progressed as separate scheme.

AINSDALE ON SEA

Ainsdale Coastal Gateway

Former Sands Public House, Shore Road, Ainsdale.

- Sefton Council went out to the market for the former Sands Public House in Ainsdale (Opposite Pontins) following soft market testing that indicated a sufficient level of interest to encourage a formal marketing of the site.
- Sefton is assessing responses received and carrying out further discussion with parties who have expressed an interest as part of ongoing due diligence. Marketing of the site will continue in the interim. Marketing Website link: [Former Sands Public House, Shore Road, Ainsdale, Ainsdale, PR8 2QD | Property to rent | Savills](#); and [Shore Road, Ainsdale, PR8 | Fitton Estates](#)

Ainsdale Neighbourhood Centre, Sandbrook Way

- In February 2023 Cabinet agreed the next stage of work to bring it into full Council ownership including ongoing negotiations with outstanding owners.
- Cabinet agreed to progress appointing agents to explore the market in the site to support the Council's ambitions for change. Work is ongoing, however initial expressions of interest from the market are positive and the results are being considered by officers and members.
- Details of the marketing brochure can be found here: [Sandbrook Way, Ainsdale PR8 3RW - Keppie Massie](#)

TOURISM

Events

Southport Food & Drink Festival - 2nd – 4th June

- The 2023 Food & Drink Festival was one of the busiest attendance wise.
- Feedback was extremely positive from both the public and the traders.
- The new site layout was well received again by both the public and traders.
- Booking forms for next year's event will be sent out in November

Southport Air Show - 9th & 10th September

The Southport Air Show took place on the 9th and 10th of September, the event is worth over £1.5m to the local economy with most of the hotels full and increased custom across the town with large of visitors travelling for the event.

Because of a combination of The Red Arrows being advertised s opening the show at 12 (The Council has no control over this), great weather forecasted for Saturday and storms forecasted for Sunday resulted in bumper crowds on the Saturday which unfortunately resulted in large queues. The ground team worked as hard as they could to get people parked and into the event. Advance communication about arriving early and using all forms of transport was communicated leading up to the event.

Unfortunately, The Red Arrows cancelling is out of our control, , but with all air shows the lineups are subject to change at short notice. It was evident that the town's business benefited greatly over the weekend, boosting the local economy by millions. Over 9 months planning the event took place with lots of the tourism team being on site all weekend and the week before from 6am every day, unfortunately Council staff received large amounts of unacceptable abuse from members of the public. With the majority from people from outside the event boundary trying to get in for free using force.

In conclusion the event attracted 40,000 to the event site with tens of thousands more into the town.

The British Musical Fireworks Championship – 22nd & 23rd September

- Event plans are now finalised.
- All infrastructure and event staff have been confirmed.
- All competitors have provided relevant documentation.
- Event set up will commence on Wednesday 20th September.

Destination Marketing

- **Summer Campaign** – The main campaign runs until the end of August. It has included radio (both FM and digital), out of home advertising (37 large format digital billboards across the northwest), website updates, e-newsletter and other digital activity (Facebook and Google PPC).
- **PR** – Media coverage has included MSN, Liverpool Echo, Lancs Live, Birmingham Live, Head Topics and local Reach plc digital media and Dune fm.
- **Visitor Guide** – Work has begun on the 2024 edition; early concepts have been received and approved. Full copy expected in September. Advertising sales are underway.
- **Southport Restaurateurs Association** – The 2024 guide design is about to commence. Guide to be delivered before Christmas for distribution from end of January. Membership currently stands at 20.
- **E-newsletter** - Database stands at circa 52,000 with the addition of 2022/2023 data and regular newsletters are sent to this audience (the latest being as part of the summer campaign).
- **Travel Trade** – Our stand at British Tourism & Travel Show (March 2024) has been booked. We are also attending The Group Leisure & Travel Show in Milton Keynes on 5 October, this will be on a stand-share basis with Liverpool. Advertising continues to be placed in key travel trade publications. Three pieces of editorial have been written and free additional space for this has been secured with all ads booked to date.

- **Golf** – We continue to work with England's Golf Coast and Southport Golf Tours to ensure better co-ordination between the three partners and a draft golf activity plan has been produced.
- **Marketing Southport** – membership currently stands at 105 (105 this time last year also).

MLEC

- Planning approval was achieved in April, which now allows the project to commence on site. There are several pre-commencement conditions that are currently being completed to allow demolition and enabling works to commence.
- As per the pre-construction service agreement with Kier Construction they will undertake all demolition and enabling works.
- The main enabling and demolition work started in Aug 2023
- Before the enabling works installation of hoarding and utility diversions will need to be completed. Hoarding and compound set up commenced August 2023.
- Key historic items such as lighting, dance floor and art deco panels have already been safely removed to be used in MLEC.
- Once demolition and enabling works are complete the main works will commence, this is planned for spring 2024
- RIBA Stage 4 is due to be completed by the end of September, this will allow further detailed costing before progressing with the main contract.
- Value Engineering is taking place to ensure Stage 4 works remain on budget.
- The project is still due for completion in 2026 with ASM then needing 3 months for final fit out.
- Event attended at English Martyrs Primary School in Litherland – 'Meet The Professionals' organised by Elevate was a 'speed dating' style event for careers. Representing the Visitor Economy on behalf of Sefton and accompanied by Gardiner & Theobald – Project Manager for MLEC. We met with approximately 60 children organised into 12 groups. The event was a fun way to interact and inspire year 6 students to consider careers they are not aware of. The feedback from the organiser was very positive and as a result we will be supporting further events.
- Presented at 'Career Carousel' event at Meols Cop High School Southport for year 9 students. 8 workshops with approximately 25 students in each. In line with the school's theme to 'broker aspirations', by inspiring students with the knowledge of the breadth of opportunities on their 'doorstep', this event was used as a preparation to a larger event which will be held across the trust in November at Southport Market. An overview of Southport's Visitor Economy was presented with an emphasis on the importance of events. On 6th September 180 students attended an event which at Southport Market – 'Career Detectives'. The events will showcase the MLEC information and its importance to the future of the Visitor Economy along with representation from Sefton Regeneration Team, Kier Construction, and various other local business representation.
- Initial conversations for future engagement have also taken place with Sefton Volunteer Service – CVS and with Compassion Acts. As one of their support services Compassion Acts organise the 'uniform hub' for schools and to expand this service we are looking to use the organisation as a conduit to deliver further initiatives such as, 'Back to School' essential kits, 'Suited Up' – interview clothing, and 'Christmas Eve Treat Bundles'.

Southport Pier

- Pier remains closed due to health and safety concerns with further damage to decking after visual inspection.
- A full structural survey has been completed; initial feedback has now confirmed the Pier must remain closed until full refurbishment. The final survey is still awaited.
- External support has been appointed to lead on Cost Management, Project Management, and other key services.
- It is now estimated the full works will be more than £13m, this includes works to the sub-structure including timber joists and steel work. These costs will be further refined though the next few months with a full report being presented to Cabinet later this year with engagement with funding bodies ongoing.