



# CONSULTATION REPORT

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT LOCAL  
ECONOMY STRATEGY  
AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2024

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**Isle of Man**  
Government

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# INTRODUCTION

In August 2024, Business Isle of Man (The Agency), an Executive Agency within the Department for Enterprise, published a Local Economy Strategy (The Strategy) for the Isle of Man in draft format. **The development of this Strategy fulfils an Island Plan commitment, and the implementation of the Strategy will contribute to the delivery of several Island Plan goals.** These goals include sustaining a strong and diverse economy and building great communities. Business Isle of Man produced the Strategy following extensive research and public consultation; this work incorporated comprehensive consumer surveys, Town Audits, and in-depth stakeholder consultation.

The Local Economy Strategy focuses on the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors. The Isle of Man's Economic Strategy acknowledges retail, hospitality, and leisure as enabling sectors of the economy. The economic strength of these sectors is crucial to the Isle of Man's long-term financial health and the Economic Strategy's objectives. Retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses directly employ over 8,000

people in the Isle of Man, support hundreds of additional positions in the wider economy, and play a vital role in the quality of life thousands of Manx residents enjoy.

The Strategy proposes a three-pillar approach to seizing opportunities, building on strengths, and addressing challenges with the ultimate aim of delivering the Strategy's Vision.

## Draft Local Economy Strategy Vision:

**To ensure the Island remains a great place to live by increasing the vibrancy of our retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors.**

This Vision was updated and defined with more clarity following the publishing of the draft Strategy and the public consultation that was subsequently undertaken.

## Revised Local Economy Strategy Vision:

**To ensure the Island is a great place to live, supporting vibrancy and distinctiveness in our city, towns, and villages by empowering communities and enabling retail, leisure, and hospitality businesses.** Detailed within the Strategy are Seven Guiding Principles that will guide and direct implementation and monitoring and evaluation metrics, which include footfall levels and vacancy rates.

*"Tailored Business Support: Members feel that more details should be provided in the Strategy on how support for individual businesses and communities will be delivered. Local Stakeholder Involvement: Currently, Laxey has a relatively informal business network association. A more formal sub-committee with local stakeholders, as suggested, would be very useful in ensuring wide ongoing collaboration and local plan development."* - Garff Commissioners

## Local Economy Strategy Vision:

*To ensure the Island is a great place to live, supporting vibrancy and distinctiveness in our city, towns, and villages by empowering communities and enabling retail, leisure, and hospitality businesses.*

# CONSULTATION PERIOD

The draft Local Economy Strategy has been available to read and review on Business Isle of Man's website since its publication. The Strategy received significant coverage in the local press and was presented to the Manx public at the Isle of Man Government Conference 2024 in September. It was vital that stakeholders such as businesses owners, Commissioners, and members of the public who support the Island's retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, were offered the opportunity to provide their views on the draft Strategy. Business Isle of Man promoted the consultation mechanisms in the period following the publication of the draft Strategy via direct outreach and media coverage. The draft Strategy itself was produced following stakeholder oriented workshop sessions in multiple locations, these sessions complemented the various other research and audit related projects that Business Isle of Man coordinated to inform the Strategy.

Following the publication of the draft Strategy, Business Isle of Man held **four local feedback sessions** across the Island. **Over 100 people attended these workshops**, representing many community stakeholders, and they allowed for the draft Strategy to be debated in detail.

Representatives from Business Isle of Man also attended several local authority meetings to discuss the Strategy with Commissioners and answer their questions. Furthermore, the Agency conducted an **online survey completed by seventy-four respondents, including over thirty local businesses, local authorities, and trader groups.** In addition to the feedback provided via the online survey, numerous stakeholder organisations, such as local authorities and trader groups, have submitted comments related to the draft Strategy in the form of written correspondence.

Feedback and survey data was reviewed by Business Isle of Man, with trends identified by reviewing and categorising comments. Responses to key questions were analysed to provide Business Isle of Man a clear and quantified understanding of the extent to which consultees supported different aspects of the Strategy, such as the Guiding Principles and Strategic Goals. This allowed Business Isle of Man to focus on refining areas of the Strategy that were not supported as unanimously as others. Numerous questions were asked, via survey and during feedback sessions, relating to the potential prioritisation of the Strategic Goals defined under each Strategy Pillar.

Consultee responses provided Business Isle of Man with ranked strategic priorities which are discussed within this document.

**Business Isle of Man is grateful to all those who have taken the time to provide their views since the draft Strategy was published. Responses received have enabled Business Isle of Man to prioritise the goals, actions, and outcomes detailed in the Strategy and will contribute to improving the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation.**

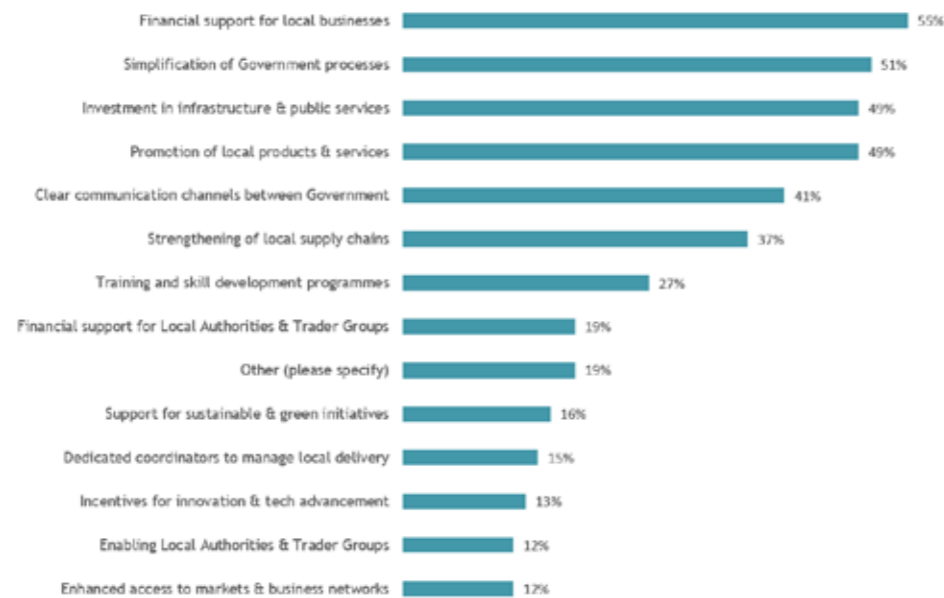
# FEEDBACK & PUBLIC RESPONSE

Feedback provided was varied; however, specific clear themes emerged. Collectively, respondents considered the following factors to be the most crucial in delivering the Strategy's desired outcomes:

1. Financial support for local businesses (55% considered crucial).
2. The simplification of Government processes (51% considered crucial).
3. The promotion of local products and services (50% considered crucial).
4. Investment in infrastructure and public services (50% considered crucial).

Business Isle of Man has prioritised these work streams within the Strategy and the accompanying implementation plan.

Factors crucial to delivering the outcomes of the Local Economy Strategy?



*“Empowerment of Local Authorities needs to include trusting those authorities to make the right decisions for their communities.” - Douglas City Council*

# KEY FINDINGS

Consultees broadly supported the Strategy's Guiding Principles. Over 85% of survey respondents considered six of the Strategy's seven Guiding Principles important, with 55% considering these principles very important. The endorsement of these Guiding Principles is reassuring and encouraging. The broad support for these Principles that the research indicated will allow Business Isle of Man to finalise the Strategy with the knowledge that, although further work is required regarding specific initiatives, the Strategy's fundamental tenets are broadly supported. These principles will play a fundamental role in implementing the Strategy, developing criteria related to funding

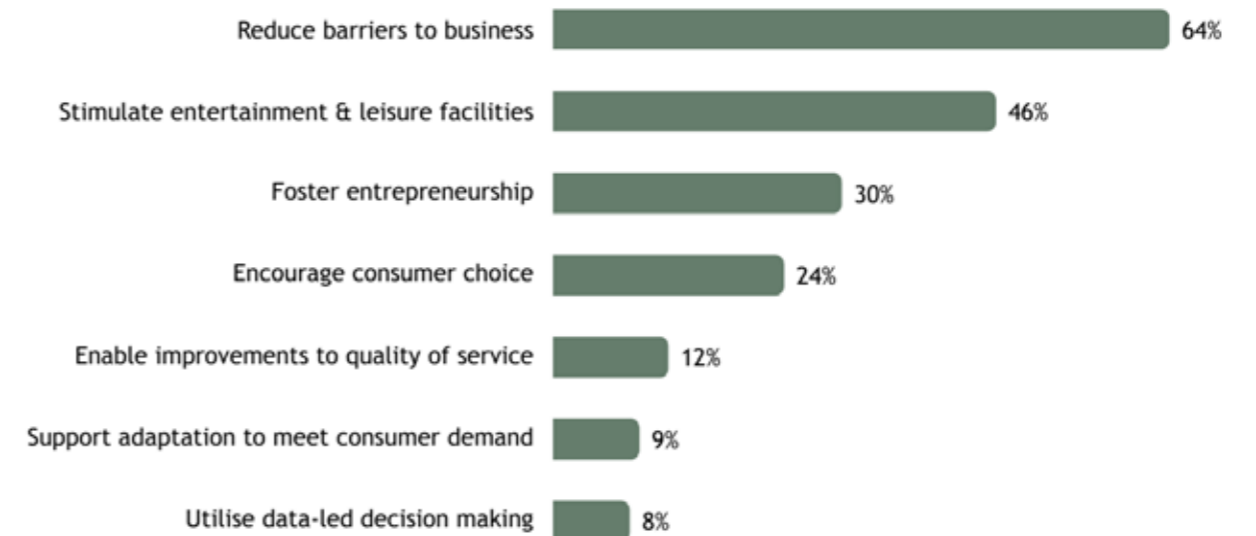
schemes devised to support the Strategy, and the decision-making process associated with funding applications.

The consultation indicated that stakeholders broadly agree with the priorities categorised within the draft Strategy's Infrastructure and Place Management and Enterprise and Consumer Experience Pillars. As detailed in the graph below, survey respondents viewed a number of the Strategic Goals listed under these pillars as more significant than others, and the prioritisation ranking that the online survey produced was supported by the in-person feedback provided to Business Isle of Man. The resource dedicated to the actions undertaken to deliver the Strategy will reflect the prioritisation that stakeholder consultees have collectively determined, as will the timing of proposed actions and the implementation plan.

Which two Infrastructure & Place Management Strategic Goals should be prioritised?



Which two Enterprise & Consumer Experience Strategic Goals should be prioritised?





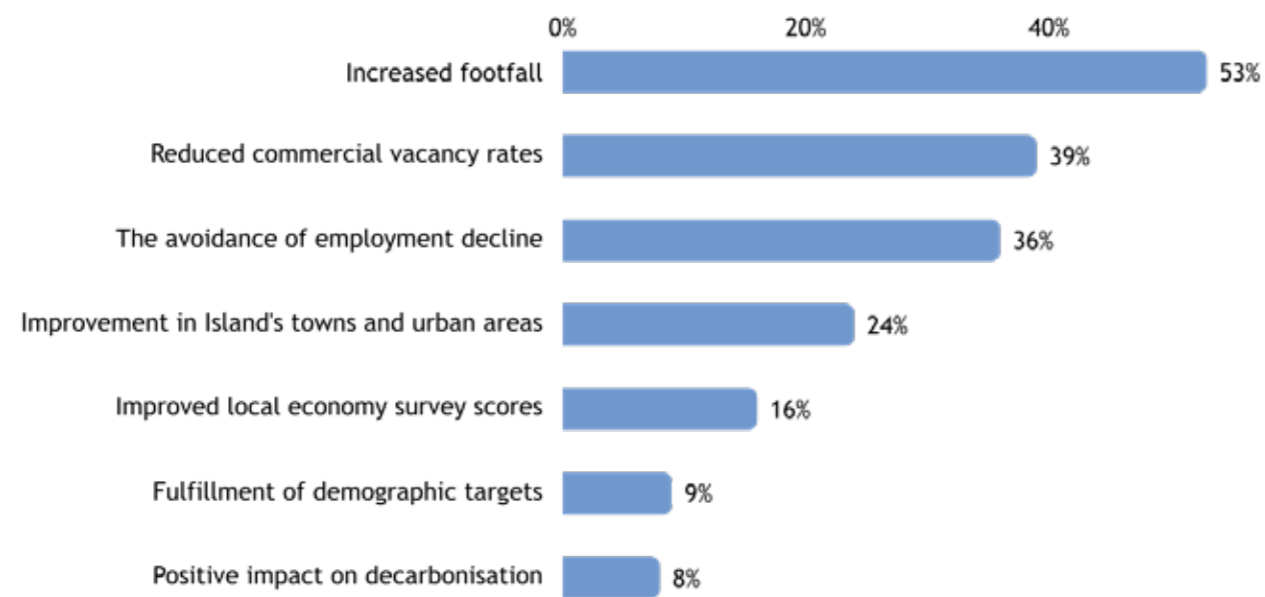
Where the Strategic Goals included under the Local Empowerment and Partnerships Pillar are concerned, the feedback received by Business Isle of Man regarding prioritisation was not definitive.

As a result, Business Isle of Man will primarily prioritise the relevant Strategic Goals in accordance with the likelihood that they will achieve the Strategy’s intended outcomes.

As evidenced, survey respondents deemed four Strategy outcomes to be of paramount importance. Business Isle of Man will focus efforts on:

1. Achieving and monitoring increases in footfall in key areas.
2. Reducing vacancy rates.
3. Avoiding employment decline in retail, hospitality and leisure.
4. Improving the attributes of the Island’s towns and urban areas.

Which outcomes do you consider to be most significant?



# ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY

Aside from responding to specific questions, stakeholders offered their perspectives regarding the potential for the Strategy to instigate positive change and highlighted potential challenges. The key themes ascertained from the stakeholder commentary will impact the schemes and initiatives developed to support the Local Economy Strategy and the corresponding implementation plan. While numerous comments were more relevant to potential town development plans than the Local Economy Strategy, many comments provided raised similar issues, which included:

- The need for an implementation plan which includes measurable objectives.
- The importance of off-Island visitors to local businesses.
- The requirement for sufficient funding.
- A desire for bold action regarding vacant units.
- The need for reducing barriers to business to be a key focus area.
- Accessibility and parking were viewed as critical by many consultees.
- The need to consider challenges and opportunities related to online retail.
- General backing for town centre managers and support for strengthening trader groups.
- The risk of over-reliance on Local Authorities.

## STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

A number of those who responded to the online survey or attended a Local Economy Strategy Feedback Events remarked that the Strategy contained some repetition, and that certain objectives and actions required further clarification. Consequently, Business Isle of Man have sought to remove some of the duplication within the Strategy and to clarify the work that will be undertaken.

### ADDRESSING PARKING PROVISION

The extent to which the Local Economy Strategy would impact parking and accessibility-related issues was questioned throughout the consultation process. While actions and work programmes that focus on these areas are ongoing in other areas of government, engaging with stakeholders in relation to these issues will increase priority due to the consultation conducted. Additionally, as a component of the work undertaken to implement the Local Economy Strategy, Business Isle of Man will seek to support stakeholders, such as local authorities and trade organisations, to resolve specific challenges related to parking and accessibility by reviewing potential funding routes and liaising with relevant public sector bodies and private sector organisations.

## RESPONDENTS VIEWS ON STRATEGY’S IMPACT

Survey respondents were evenly split regarding whether they felt the Local Economy Strategy would positively impact the Isle of Man’s retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors. The vast majority of stakeholders who disagreed that the Strategy would have a positive impact held this opinion due to their scepticism concerning the funding schemes and the commitment of the Department for Enterprise and wider Government to deliver the Strategy. To address these concerns, Business Isle of Man will ensure that the nature of financial support available to implement the Strategy is communicated effectively to stakeholders, as is the support available to applicants throughout what is envisaged to be an efficient application process.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Furthermore, Business Isle of Man have updated the Local Economy Strategy to provide additional information regarding the financial support mechanisms that will be utilised to advance the Strategy’s objectives. The Agency will publish an implementation plan detailing work to be completed, timescales, reporting metrics, and targets and has published regularly update stakeholders to advise of progress made towards achieving the Strategy’s objectives. £1.3 million n funding has already been committed to support the Local Economy Fund and the Domestic Event Fund.



“The Local Economy Strategy was developed through a process of comprehensive town audits and consultations. What has been achieved is a visionary strategy that focuses on harnessing the imagination of stakeholders to take ownership and collaborate in creating a master plan for the future of their towns” - Northern Chamber



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