



LOCAL ECONOMY STRATEGY

SUBJECT TO TYNWALD

2024 - 2034



Isle of Man
Government

Reilys Ellan Vannin

01 FOREWORD



Hon Tim Johnston MHK
Minister for Enterprise

I am pleased to introduce the Isle of Man's Local Economy Strategy (the Strategy), a comprehensive roadmap designed to empower our local communities and stimulate economic activity. Our vision is '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'.

Business Isle of Man has developed this Strategy through extensive consultation with residents, businesses and community stakeholder groups. Their insights and perspectives have shaped a way forward that reflects the unique character of our Island, the aspirations of our entrepreneurs, community leaders, and residents, and aligns with the ambitions set out within the Island Plan and the long-term Economic Strategy.

Through this meaningful dialogue, we have been able to produce a Strategy that is not only consistent with our vision for the future, but also provides an actionable and tangible

approach to progress.

The Strategy reflects the needs of our communities and the preferences of customers. This extends right across the board, from improving consumer choice and investor confidence, to enhancing the aesthetic appeal of some of our urban areas. As a Department, and indeed a Government, we understand that these matters are important not only to the businesses operating in these sectors, but also to each and every resident and visitor of our Island.

Central to this Strategy is the belief that local representatives and business owners are best placed to make decisions regarding their future, and advance ideas that are integral to their communities and companies. This extends to the regeneration focused initiatives it proposes, which aim to encourage investment and de-risk creative enterprise.

By supporting locally-driven projects, instilling a sense of ownership, and creating appropriate funding mechanisms we strive to strengthen our communities and provide a social and economic environment where businesses can thrive.

The retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors play a pivotal role in the Isle of Man's proposition as a great place to work and live. These sectors have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of considerable challenges, from the impacts of COVID-19 to significant inflationary pressures. Their adaptability and perseverance have been key to sustaining our local economy and providing an invaluable source of enjoyment, comfort, and entertainment for our residents and visitors.

This Strategy acknowledges the critical nature of these sectors and their role in supporting and enabling numerous other industries. Growth and innovation in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors will enhance the attractiveness of our Island to visitors and investors alike, contributing to the well-being of our residents and driving sustainable modernisation.

I am confident that this Local Economy Strategy will catalyze positive change over the coming decade. It is a call to action for Local Authorities, businesses, and residents to work towards the vision they have for their communities, and for the Government to show equal dedication to facilitating their efforts. Together, we can ensure that our city, towns and villages are not only places of economic activity but also centres of community life, creativity, and opportunity.

"Growth and innovation in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors will enhance the attractiveness of our Island to visitors and investors alike, contributing to the well-being of our residents and driving sustainable modernisation."





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.

We will achieve this by **community-led decision-making** and the **empowerment of Local Authorities**, enabling initiatives that rejuvenate our Island's urban centres. We will develop **financial support mechanisms and policies** that reduce business risk, lower barriers to growth, and drive entrepreneurship.



02 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Local Economy

The Isle of Man's Economic Strategy identifies 'Enabling Sectors', such as retail, hospitality, and culture & leisure, as crucial to ensuring the Island is an attractive place to live and work. Developed by Business Isle of Man, an Executive Agency within the Department for Enterprise, the Local Economy Strategy provides a blueprint for strengthening these sectors.

While the local economy comprises a broad range of sectors, this Strategy is focused on three: Retail, Hospitality, and Leisure, recognising that they play an integral role in the wellbeing of all residents and are essential to facilitating strong and lively communities.

The Local Economy Strategy includes goals, objectives, and actions that aim to drive entrepreneurship, encourage diversification, and reduce barriers to growth and investment. Guiding Principles have been developed to be consistent and supportive of other key policies, including the Island Plan, the Isle of Man Economic Strategy, and the Isle of Man Climate Change Plan.

Having overcome significant challenges in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and a period of high inflation, the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors remain economically and socially critical, underpinning local communities while providing employment and contributing to national income. Implementing the proposed actions included in this Strategy will positively impact the Isle of Man's attractiveness to potential new residents, improve the Island's visitor offering, and contribute to the wellbeing of its existing population.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Local Economy Strategy is to define the goals, objectives, and actions that will contribute to fulfilling the Strategy's Vision. The Local Economy Strategy also specifies the principles that the Department for Enterprise will adopt when implementing the Strategy.

SUPPORTING OUR ISLAND PLAN AND THE ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Local Economy Strategy is a key component of the Island Plan, which sets out Government's vision to build a more secure, vibrant, and sustainable future for the Isle of Man. The actions the Strategy proposes will have a positive impact on growing the Island's economically

active population and supporting vibrant communities. The Strategy provides a practical framework for advancing the Island Plan objective of maintaining a strong and diverse economy and the Isle of Man Economic Strategy objective of creating and filling new jobs.

LISTENING TO THE MANX PUBLIC AND WORKING WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

This Strategy was informed by:



A Local Economy and High Street Survey that generated **over 1,250 responses** from Manx residents.



Consultation with representatives from over **90 businesses.**



Comprehensive Town Audits that graded urban areas according to quality of place metrics.



Built environment surveys that categorised units and determined vacancy rates.



Considerable **engagement and consultation with Local Commissioners.**

The research and consultation process identified strengths, and opportunities for those operating within the Local Economy. Research also highlighted the challenges they are experiencing regarding their operating environment and consumer requirements.

OUR STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Established high streets with a diverse range of independent stores and national multiples.

Manx heritage and our unique status as the only entire nation to be named a UNESCO Biosphere.

The spending power of the Island's residents.

Unique individual Town centre characteristics.

Well-established and effective retail planning policy.

Strong public desire to support local businesses.

Clear targets set by Climate Change Plan.

Opportunity to build on well-regarded hospitality offering.

Visit Isle of Man, anticipate an increase in visitor numbers to 500,000/year by 2032.

Supporting town centre living and working.

Opportunity to drive footfall through improved stakeholder coordination.

Opportunity to learn from businesses prior to decision making.

Consumer desire for experience-based retail.

Opportunity to think creatively to provide new reasons to visit town centres.

OUR CHALLENGES

Unavailability of desired brands, products, and stores.

Vacant town centre units and competition for footfall across the Island's urban centres.

An increase in home entertainment options impacting the night-time economy and perceived decline in night-time offering.

Lack of economies of scale disadvantaging independent businesses.

Access and parking challenges within town centres.

Shortage of experienced and qualified employees.

Disparity between leisure facilities accessible in the Isle of Man and those accessible elsewhere.

Declining high street footfall.

Achieving Isle of Man's decarbonisation targets.

Investment discouraged due to perception that Government is bureaucratic.

Unavailability of appropriate high street units.

Lack of coordination regarding events, initiatives, and opening times.

Perceived neglect of public realm and underinvestment in built environment.

High barriers to entry due to lease terms and costs.

Long-term UK trend towards out-of-town retail.

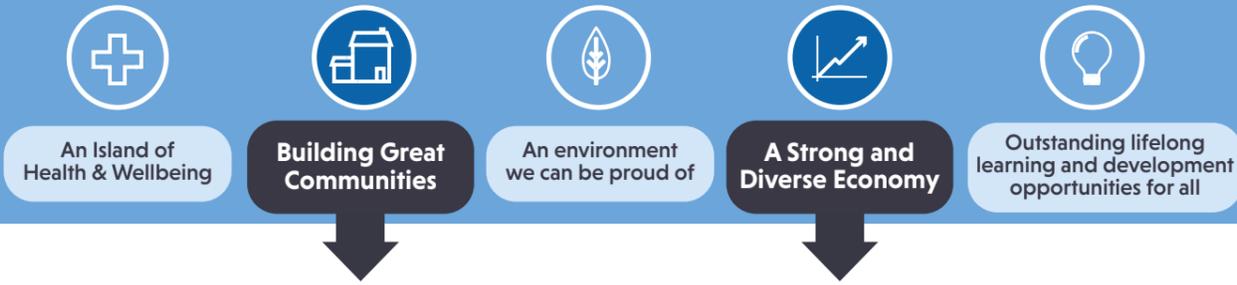
Lack of a defined vision/masterplan for each of the Island's urban centres.

Cost increases and revenue constraints reducing investment funds.

Online and off-Island shopping alternatives.

The LOCAL ECONOMY STRATEGY on a page

SUPPORTING ISLAND PLAN PRIORITIES



THE 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.

We will achieve this through **community led decision-making** and the **empowerment of Local Authorities**, enabling initiatives that rejuvenate our Island's urban centres. We will **develop financial support mechanisms** and **policies that reduce business risk, lower barriers to growth, and drive entrepreneurship.**

3 PILLARS & 20 STRATEGIC GOALS

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE MANAGEMENT	2. ENTERPRISE & CONSUMER EXPERIENCE	3. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & PARTNERSHIPS
<p>1.1 Transform Underused and Vacant Spaces</p> <p>1.2 Invigorate High Streets and Catalyse Vibrancy</p>	<p>2.1 Encourage Consumer Choice</p> <p>2.2 Reduce Barriers to Business</p>	<p>3.1 Develop Effective Town Partnerships</p> <p>3.2 Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes</p>
<p>1.3 Encourage Town Centre First Regeneration</p> <p>1.4 Improve Town Centre Accessibility</p> <p>1.5 Support Strategic Planning Policy</p> <p>1.6 Encourage Sustainable Practices</p> <p>1.7 Improve Collaboration to Maximise Business Potential</p> <p>1.8 Enable Place Promotion and Branding</p>	<p>2.3 Foster Entrepreneurship</p> <p>2.4 Support Adaptation to Meet Consumer Demand</p> <p>2.5 Utilise Data-led Decision Making</p> <p>2.6 Enable Businesses to Improve Service Quality</p> <p>2.7 Stimulate the Provision of Entertainment and Leisure Facilities</p>	<p>3.3 Empower Stakeholder Partnerships</p> <p>3.4 Create Open and Clear Communication Channels</p> <p>3.5 Drive Community Engagement</p>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
	Foster and build great communities	Strong & diverse economy	Lead to job creation	Consistent with climate change plan	Local first approach	Stimulate investment	Cater to a broad range of customers

OUTCOMES: This Strategy will result in **increased town centre footfall, reduced high street vacancy rates, the creation of employment opportunities,** and the enhancement of the Isle of Man's reputation as a **great place to shop, eat out, and enjoy first-class entertainment.**

MONITORING & EVALUATION:				
	Footfall	Vacancy Rates	Town Audits	Review Impact Of Initiatives & Adjust Policy Levers

A 3-PILLAR APPROACH TO DELIVERING A THRIVING AND VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY

This Strategy encompasses twenty strategic goals that address challenges and capitalise on strengths and opportunities.

These strategic goals, and associated actions, have been categorised under one of three policy pillars: Infrastructure & Place Management, Enterprise & Consumer Experience, and Local Empowerment & Partnerships. Six strategic goals have been prioritised due to the significance of the opportunity or challenge they address, the accuracy with which their impact can be measured, and the likelihood of the initiatives to catalyse positive change.

When achieved, the strategic goals included within this framework will contribute to securing the long-term economic health of our high streets and town centres while improving the vibrancy of our Local Economy. The actions undertaken as a result of the Local Economy Strategy will help to create retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors that are thriving, sustainable and distinctively Manx.

★

The Strategic Goals included within this framework will contribute to securing the long-term economic health of our high streets and town centres.



PILLAR 1: INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE MANAGEMENT

1.1 Transform Underused and Vacant Spaces

- Support collaboration to fill underutilised spaces.
- Make upper floors more usable and, where appropriate, convert to residential accommodation.
- Support increased provision of leisure infrastructure.
- Encourage the use of visual assets.

1.2 Invigorate High Streets and Catalyse Vibrancy

- Directly support initiatives that stimulate high street footfall.
- Make events easier to hold.
- Incentivise and support improvements to the public realm.
- Support the development of new attractions in town centres.

Additional Strategic Goals*:

- 1.3 Encourage Town Centre First Regeneration
- 1.4 Improve Town Centre Accessibility
- 1.5 Support Strategic Planning Policy
- 1.6 Encourage Sustainable Practices
- 1.7 Improve Collaboration to Maximise Business Potential
- 1.8 Enable Place Promotion and Branding

* Detailed list of actions for each goal stated on page 32.



PILLAR 2: ENTERPRISE & CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

2.1 Encourage Increased Consumer Choice

- Support local businesses to satisfy public demand for brands and products.
- Introduce schemes that support the economic strength of the night-time economy.
- Engage with anchor tenants.

2.2 Reduce Barriers to Business

- Incentivise landlords and business owners to adapt, modernise, invest in their interiors, enhance customer experience and improve service quality.
- Remove key obstacles to growth and innovation.
- Improve Government-led stakeholder communication.
- Provide support for businesses to invest in digital and technological infrastructure.
- Lead campaigns and launch initiatives to alleviate staffing challenges.

Additional Strategic Goals:

- 2.3 Foster Entrepreneurship
- 2.4 Support Adaptation to Meet Consumer Demand
- 2.5 Utilise Data-led Decision Making
- 2.6 Enable Businesses to Improve Quality of Service
- 2.7 Stimulate the Provision of Entertainment and Leisure Facilities

PILLAR 3: LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

3.1 Develop Effective Town Partnerships

- Provide targeted support to develop, launch and strengthen partnerships and stakeholder networks to help build business confidence.
- Work with stakeholders to establish appropriate civic organisations to drive positive local change.

3.2 Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes

- Create new funding routes, and enhance existing schemes, such as the Town and Village Regeneration Scheme and the Domestic Event Fund that will empower Local Authorities.

Additional Strategic Goals:

- 3.3 Empower Stakeholder Partnerships
- 3.4 Create Open and Clear Communication Channels
- 3.5 Drive Community Engagement

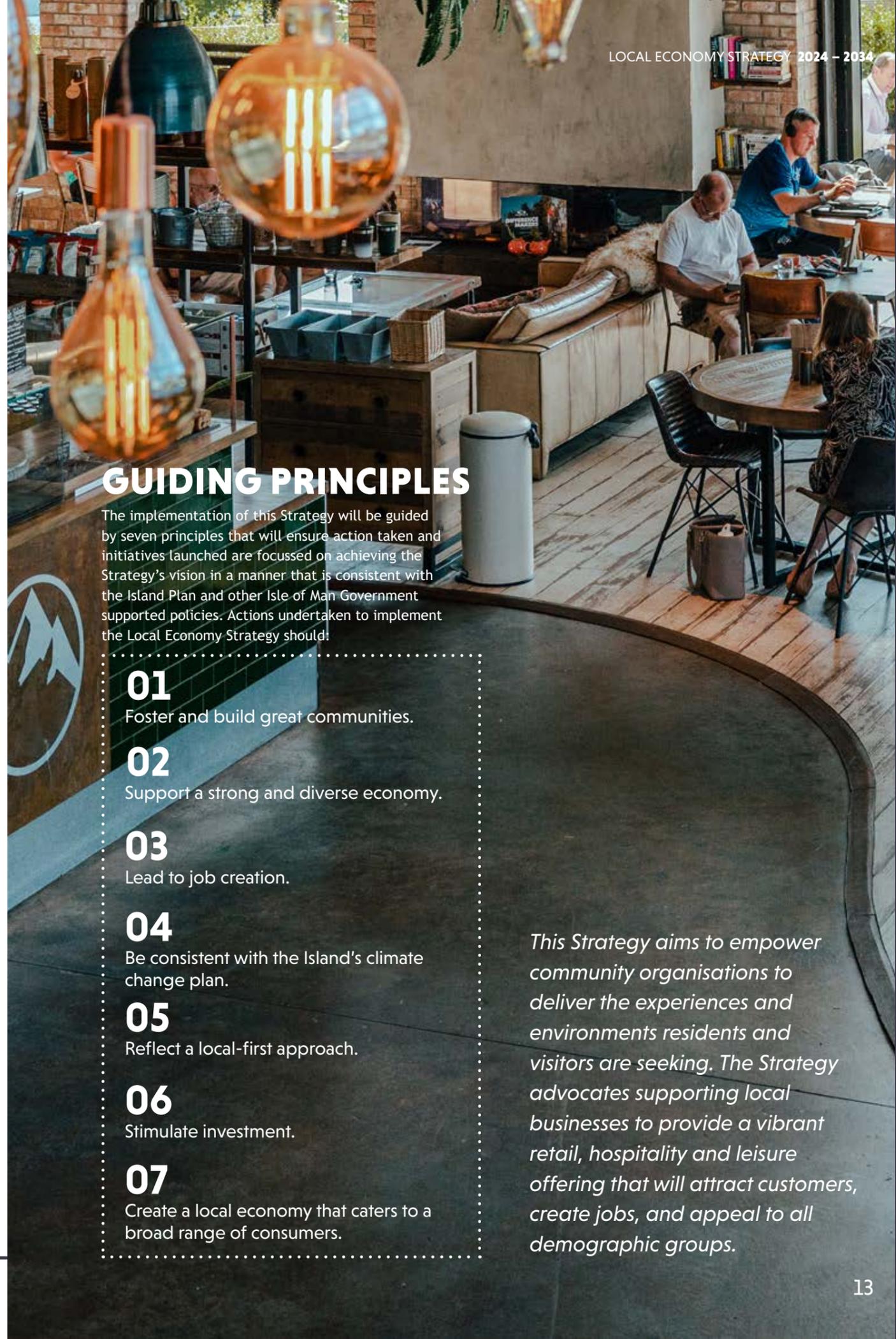


IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

An initial 12-24 month implementation plan, which will detail funding, responsibilities, key performance indicators, and monitoring and control procedures, will be produced to complement this Strategy. Business Isle of Man will devise this plan according to implementation principles that include defining short and long-term objectives, collaborating across Government Departments, and embracing an adaptable approach to implementation. This Strategy will be enabled by new financial support schemes and the updating of existing schemes and through the development of focussed policies and guidelines.

Examples of key performance indicators and outcomes that will be monitored include town footfall, vacancy rates, Local Economy and High Street Survey scores and quality of place metrics.

The Department for Enterprise and Business Isle of Man Board will undertake regular progress assessments, providing an opportunity for outcomes to be evaluated and assessed against each strategic goal. The Strategy suggests possible contingent actions that may be undertaken depending on the outcome and findings of this review.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of this Strategy will be guided by seven principles that will ensure action taken and initiatives launched are focussed on achieving the Strategy's vision in a manner that is consistent with the Island Plan and other Isle of Man Government supported policies. Actions undertaken to implement the Local Economy Strategy should:

- 01** Foster and build great communities.
- 02** Support a strong and diverse economy.
- 03** Lead to job creation.
- 04** Be consistent with the Island's climate change plan.
- 05** Reflect a local-first approach.
- 06** Stimulate investment.
- 07** Create a local economy that caters to a broad range of consumers.

This Strategy aims to empower community organisations to deliver the experiences and environments residents and visitors are seeking. The Strategy advocates supporting local businesses to provide a vibrant retail, hospitality and leisure offering that will attract customers, create jobs, and appeal to all demographic groups.

03 OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

From ice cream parlours and nightclubs to bowling alleys and jewellery stores, the Local Economy encompasses a vast range of businesses providing Manx residents and visitors to the Island with memorable experiences and products they cherish. The Local Economy is also a major employer, and its fiscal health, diversity, and robustness are crucial to the Isle of Man's long-term economic sustainability.

THE LOCAL ECONOMY OFFERS DIRECT ECONOMIC BENEFITS INCLUDING:



Employment
(income tax and NI)



Other **government revenues**
(VAT, C&E revenue, rates etc)



The provision of a **key attribute** in efforts to **attract visitors** and new residents



Over 900 retail, hospitality, and leisure venues and outlets across our city and towns (Feb24)*



8,500 jobs and **over 200** vacancies (Sept 24)



Generation of well over **£200 million** in National Income (2021/22)



Douglas town centre footfall **ranging** from **210 people** per average hour during the **quietest week** of the year to **685 people** during its **busiest** (2023)

* Local Data Company Premises Survey Feb 2024

** Quarterly Statistical Report Q3 2024 / Labour Market Report September 2024

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.*

04 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The goals set in this Strategy, and the implementation of the actions the Strategy proposes, will be guided by the principals below.

The delivery of the Local Economy Strategy should:

- 1 Foster and build great communities.
- 2 Support a strong and diverse economy.
- 3 Lead to job creation.
- 4 Be consistent with the Island's net zero commitment.
- 5 Adopt a local first approach to tackling challenges and seizing opportunities.
- 6 Stimulate investment and incentivise development to improve the quality and vibrancy of the Island's retail, hospitality, and leisure proposition.
- 7 Create a retail, leisure, and hospitality offering that has broad appeal and is attractive to a wide range of demographic constituents.

These Guiding Principles ensure the Strategy:

Contributes towards the achievement of existing Government objectives.

Reflects the perspectives of private sector stakeholders.



GOVERNMENT POLICY

Business Isle of Man has developed this Strategy in a manner that is consistent with and mindful of existing Isle of Man Government Policies and Strategies.

OUR ISLAND PLAN

While the themes that shape the policies and objectives included in the Island Plan are relevant to this Strategy, the key priorities of ‘Building great communities’ and ‘Strong & diverse economy’ are integral. Many of the initiatives and policies related to encouraging a ‘Strong and diverse economy’ are further developed within the Economic Strategy and both documents emphasise the necessity of creating a more economically active population, a principle that this Strategy embodies.

Tynwald approved an updated version of the Island Plan in March 2024 and the ‘Building great communities’ priority includes the requirement to:

“Complete Local Economy Strategy to help inform longer-term leisure infrastructure supporting a vibrant community and the growth in economically active population”¹

The publication of this Strategy fulfills this requirement and a commitment to building great communities was fundamental to the work undertaken to inform the Strategy.

¹ Our Island Plan 2024/25 Update March 2024 p23

OUR ISLAND, OUR FUTURE 2022 – 2032 ISLE OF MAN ECONOMIC STRATEGY

In the Isle of Man’s Economic Strategy, released in November 2022, the Isle of Man Government states its commitment to improving the prosperity and quality of life of all residents and its ambition to attract a younger more diverse population to the Island. One of the primary economic ambitions of the Economic Strategy is to:

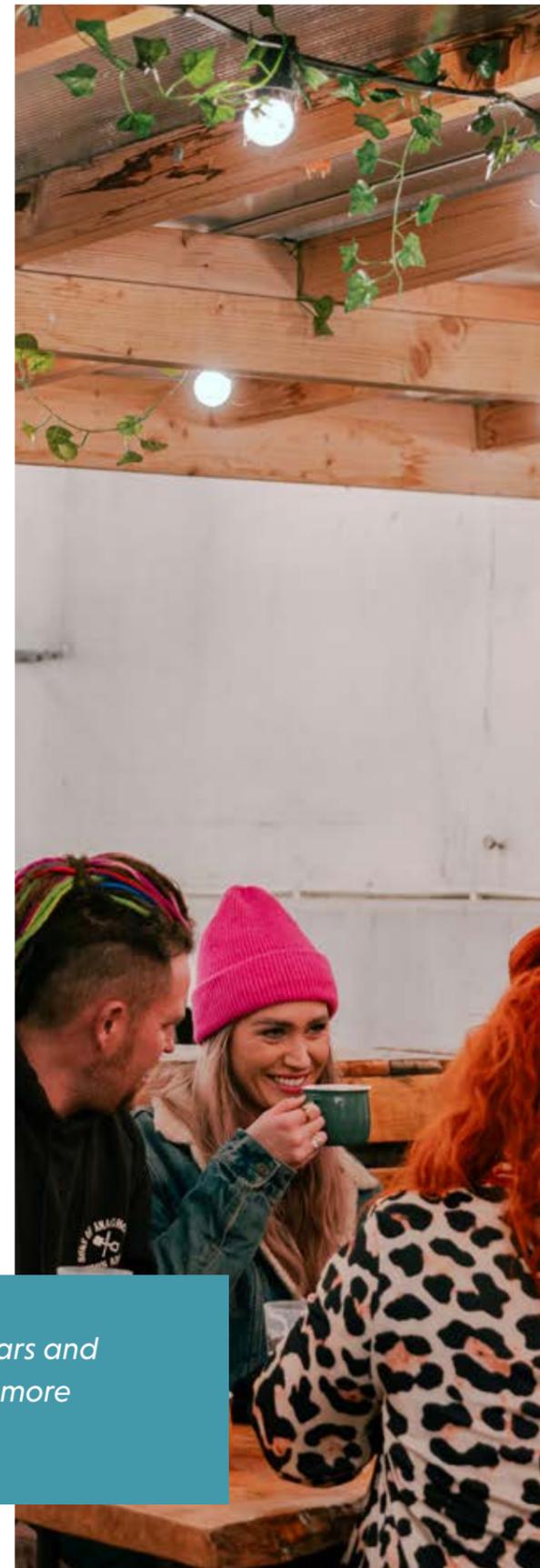
“Create and fill 5,000 new jobs across new, enabling and existing key sectors, by 2032, reaching an overall GDP of £10bn.”²

The Economic Strategy recognises that sectors focussed on serving the local population, as well as visitors to the Island, will be crucial to achieving these objectives and categorises retail, hospitality and leisure as ‘enabling sectors’.

The Economic Strategy advocates for the protection, nurturing and growth of key economic sectors, proposing that the Government adapt and modernise enabling sectors. This may be facilitated by considering active support for the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors and investing in the core infrastructure that underpins the Island’s attractiveness. This Strategy provides a framework and set of actions to implement this modernisation and adaptation.

“A high-quality and diverse range of cafés, bars and restaurants is a key part of making the Island more attractive to residents and visitors alike.”³

² Isle Of Man Economic Strategy / 2022-2032 p10
³ Isle Of Man Economic Strategy / 2022-2032 p38





The Isle of Man Climate Change Plan is widely acknowledged as one of the most important Government publications to be released in recent years.

RETAIL SECTOR STRATEGY 2013

The Isle of Man’s last Retail Sector Strategy was published in December 2013. Ten years on the retail landscape in the Isle of Man has changed. It is imperative that new actions, objectives and priorities are launched to support growth and innovation over the next ten years and beyond.

Retail Sector Strategy Vision August 2013

“To promote competitive and accessible retail and leisure environments in our town centres, which offer choice and convenience for consumers, improve the economy and enhance resident’s quality of life”

In recognition of the changing nature of high streets and town centres, this Strategy does not focus exclusively on retail. Business Isle of Man has also considered the hospitality and leisure sectors, acknowledging that residents and visitors are seeking accessible leisure activities and the opportunity to enjoy a broad range of hospitality offerings. Furthermore, although the underlying principles of the Retail Sector Strategy remain somewhat relevant, the focus on vibrancy differentiates this Strategy.

THE ISLE OF MAN CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN 2022-2027

The Isle of Man Climate Change Plan is widely acknowledged as one of the most important Government publications to be released in recent years. The Plan provides an overview of the Isle of Man’s most significant

sources of emissions, the mechanisms through which emissions will be reduced and the metrics through which progress will be monitored. Acting in a manner that supports the Climate Change Plan is embodied in this Strategy’s Guiding Principles.

In practice, this necessitates that all actions and initiatives noted in the Strategic Goals and Actions section of this report are evaluated against the deliverables contained within the Climate Change Plan prior to their implementation. Consequently, the deliverables detailed in the Climate Change Plan will influence the application of this Strategy and impact the development of initiatives.

BUSINESS ISLE OF MAN BOARD

The Non-Executive Agency Boards ensure that initiatives and strategies delivered by the Department for Enterprise are done so in collaboration and consultation with private sector representation. They provide an essential platform to ensure decisions relating to policy, strategy and the development of support mechanisms are informed by a range of perspectives and driven forward by industry.

The Business Isle of Man Board, comprised of respected leaders and experienced business people, steered the work conducted to produce this Strategy and provided regular, considered feedback. In addition to providing advice regarding the suitability of Strategic Goals and actions, the Board advocated for this Strategy to allow local businesses to work alongside the Government to meet the objectives this Strategy sets out.

This ethos led to the inclusion of ‘a local first approach...’ in this Strategy’s Guiding Principles. In practice, this principle will make local businesses a priority stakeholder in the promotion and implementation of initiatives and policies. Business Isle of Man will engage with Island businesses in a manner consistent with the Strategy before exploring alternative solutions to meeting this Strategy’s goals and objectives. This will involve communicating the Strategy’s objectives locally and promoting any resulting schemes or initiatives to local businesses.

05 STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Extensive research, consultation and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to determine the vibrancy and economic health of the Island’s retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

4 Local Economy Strategy Sessions



across the Island with over **90** Business attendees

Over 60  **in-person interviews** completed targeting under-represented groups

1,250+ responses

to the Isle of Man local economy and high street survey



Local Data Company analysis including vacancy & unit counts. Information collected on nearly



1,000 units incl. primary business activity

Meetings with representatives from

13 of the Island’s local commissioners 

Independent consultants completed in-depth

Town Audit Reports for Douglas and seven Manx towns 

This in-depth consultation process brought together the views of local residents, visitors, local businesses, and representatives from Local Authorities.

Local Economy sectors were identified and categorised. Strategic Goals aimed at addressing challenges and seizing these opportunities were then devised.

Following this process, ‘Strengths and Opportunities’ and the most significant ‘Challenges’ facing the Island’s

CATEGORY	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES	RELEVANT STRATEGIC GOAL(S) - PAGE 32
Business Operations	Opportunity to reduce long-term business cost base through investment.	1.6
Character	Town centre characteristics specific to each location.	1.8, 3.1, 3.3
	Manx heritage and our unique status as the only entire nation to be named a UNESCO Biosphere.	1.8, 3.1, 3.3
	Well-established high streets with thriving independent stores and national multiples.	1.4, 1.8
Customer Appeal	Opportunity to capitalise on the comparatively strong spending power of the Island’s population.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 2.1
	Opportunity to drive footfall through the creation of town centre accommodation.	1.1, 1.5
	Visit Isle of Man anticipate an increase in visitor numbers, goal of 500,000/year by 2032.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5
	Opportunity to increase footfall through improved trader, local authority and stakeholder communication and coordination.	1.7, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5
	Opportunity to offer consumer desire for experience-based retail in town centres.	1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6
	Opportunity to build on well-regarded hospitality offering.	1.8, 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6
	Strong public desire to support local businesses.	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.7, 2.1
	Opportunity to think creatively to provide new reasons to visit town centres.	1.2, 1.7, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5
Engagement	Opportunity to learn from businesses prior to decision making.	1.3, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4
Policy	Clear and well-established retail planning policy.	1.5
	Established and published Climate Change Plan (IOM CCP 2022-2027).	1.6

CATEGORY	CHALLENGES	RELEVANT STRATEGIC GOAL(S) - PAGE 32
Aesthetics	Increasing the attractiveness of town centres and high streets without increasing traffic congestion.	1.4, 3.2
	Perceived neglect and lack of maintenance in some areas of the public realm.	1.3, 3.2, 3.5
Built Environment	Perception that parking is difficult and expensive.	1.4
	Unavailability of units appropriate for modern high street businesses.	1.1, 2.2, 2.7
	Underinvestment in certain aspects of the built environment.	1.3, 3.2, 3.5
Business Operations	Shortage of experienced and qualified employees.	2.2, 2.4, 2.6
	Cost increases and revenue constraints reducing the availability of investment funds.	1.1, 1.6, 2.1
	High barriers to entry due to long lease terms and lease costs.	2.3
	Long-term international trend towards out-of-town retail.	1.5, 3.2, 3.5
	Lack of economies of scale disadvantaging independent businesses.	2.1, 2.2, 2.5
	Perceived decline in the variety and quality of offering in the night-time economy.	2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7
	Uneven vacancy rates across towns and urban centres and competition between towns for footfall.	1.8
	Vacant town centre units.	1.1, 1.5, 2.2
Character	Lack of a clear and defined vision for each of the Island's urban centres.	1.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5
Customer Appeal	Declining high street footfall.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 3.5
	Disparity between leisure facilities accessible in the Isle of Man and those accessible to residents in comparable locations.	1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.7
	Increase in home entertainment options impacting the night-time economy.	1.1, 1.3, 2.1
	Online and off-Island shopping alternatives.	1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1
	Unavailability of desired brands, products, and stores.	1.1, 2.1, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7
Engagement	Lack of stakeholder coordination regarding events, initiatives, and opening times.	1.7, 3.1, 3.3
Government	Investment and business activity discouraged due to perception that Government is bureaucratic.	1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 3.2, 3.4
Policy	Achievement of the Isle of Man's decarbonisation targets.	1.6



06 CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Consultation and stakeholder engagement constituted the basis of the strategic analysis undertaken to inform this Strategy's goals, objectives, and recommended actions.

LOCAL ECONOMY STRATEGY SESSIONS

Four Local Economy Strategy Sessions were held in locations in the North, South, East, and West of the Island. During these well attended sessions, representatives from over 90 local businesses were provided with the opportunity to explain to the Business Isle of Man team what they consider to be the most significant obstacles to business. In addition to challenges, potential solutions were discussed, and ideas related to new opportunities were proposed.

Following these sessions, the challenges mentioned were classified into distinct categories and specific challenges were ranked according to the number of times participants mentioned them. For example, parking was categorised as an infrastructure issue, planning was categorised as government-related, and grant limitations were categorised as funding/ support related.

Throughout the sessions a consensus was established regarding the most pressing local economy related challenges, which included:

- Cost increases resulting in diminished margins.
- Revenue constraints as a result of the 20% VAT rate and a perceived decline in disposable incomes.
- Parking issues limiting trade and footfall.
- A lack of local coordination and communication between key stakeholders.
- Aesthetic and investment related issues including vacant shops and neglected public spaces.
- Accessing Government grants and support schemes.



Several of the solutions discussed during the Local Economy Strategy Sessions received support from those attending. A number of the ideas proposed provided the basis for the actions and initiatives included within this Strategy.

Solutions and ideas included:

- Prioritise the upkeep of retail areas.
- Local town maps, noticeboards and improved signage.
- Coordination to ensure businesses are open when coaches and cruise visitors arrive.
- Use of empty shops for pop ups/incubators/markets.
- Creation of ‘Town Square’ spaces.

ISLE OF MAN LOCAL ECONOMY AND HIGH STREET SURVEY OF RESIDENTS

This research included an online survey, which received over 1,250 responses from Island residents, and over 60 in-person interviews, ensuring all socio-demographic groups were represented. Business Isle of Man conducted the research to:

- Identify gaps in the Island’s retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.
- Gain insight into customer preferences.
- Understand why Manx residents choose to shop locally or choose to shop elsewhere.
- Establish trends in consumer behaviour.
- Benchmark the Isle of Man against alternative shopping destinations.
- Ascertain public opinion regarding the built environment and its attractiveness.
- Determine the priority areas on which this Strategy should focus.

Douglas was rated average for most retail-related attributes including cleanliness, accessibility, atmosphere, and character. The City received a slightly poorer score for business hours and a higher score for the variety of stores.

Key findings included:

The Island’s retail offering for residents received an average rating of 1.9 / 5.

- o Data indicated a strong demand for both well-known brands and the variety independent stores provide.
- o Half of all survey respondents said they would be more likely to visit the high street after 6pm if shops were open later.
- o Only 20% of respondents said that they enjoy high street shopping.
- o Only 26% of respondents stated that the appearance of Douglas’s main shopping street is good or very good.
- o 75% of respondents agreed that people should shop local to help the local economy.
- o 50% of respondents stated they visit retail premises every week.

The Island’s leisure offering received an average rating of 2.2 / 5.

- o Respondents highlighted a clear lack of indoor leisure provision for families.
- o Less than 50% of respondents stated they visited leisure facilities on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.
- o When asked what type of leisure facilities are lacking on the Island, certain activities were mentioned frequently, including indoor sports activities for children and teenagers, music venues, bowling alleys, cinemas, arcades, art galleries and general indoor activities.

The Island’s hospitality offering received an average rating of 2.7 / 5.

- o Survey results demonstrated a desire for improved customer service, better value, and more speciality restaurants with global cuisine.
- o Almost 50% of respondents stated they visit hospitality businesses every week.

Quotes from Island residents provided in survey responses:

"Many leisure activities are based out of town centres, we should look to bring them into the high streets"

"The Island's high streets often lack atmosphere and character..."

"Customer service is variable in quality on the Island compared to the UK"

"Empty shops is a huge issue across the Island. Landlords / owners should be encouraged more to use these units for pop ups or community spaces"

Appendix 1 provides some additional charts relating to this piece of research.

COMMERCIAL PREMISES SURVEY

The Local Data Company, an industry leading retail location data company, visited the Isle of Man in late 2023 to conduct a detailed analysis of the makeup of the Isle of Man's high streets in support of the development of this Local Economy Strategy. The standardised tool used by the company counted the number of units across the Island in the hospitality, retail and leisure sectors. This is the first time a review of this nature has been completed in the Isle of Man and the first time vacancy rates have been calculated for each high street. This will be an important metric for tracking the impact of this Strategy.

The data shows that there are clear differences between each of the Island's high streets and town centres. Douglas and Port Erin, for example, have vacancy rates below the UK national average, whereas Castletown and Ramsey have rates higher than average, suggesting these

areas may have specific challenges to overcome. Key statistics identified through this research included:

- 11.2% vacancy rate across the Island; higher than Jersey (8%) and Isle of Wight (8.8%), lower than UK average (14%) and North West (11.6%).
- 986 retail / hospitality / leisure units in total across the Island - 112 vacant units identified.
- 24% of Manx units are occupied by "multiples" vs 35% in the UK; more independents on the Island.
- Highest vacancy rate in Castletown (19.5%) lowest in Port Erin (7.5%).

Additional data and a number of graphs related to this piece of research can be found in Appendix 2.



TOWN AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town Audit review was commissioned to support the development of the Local Economy Strategy and the Built Environment Reform Programme. The Built Environment Reform Programme is an existing Government programme aimed at fulfilling an Island Plan commitment to “Build Great Communities”. It encompassed a review of recent reports, research, data, and surveys, with a focus on retail and leisure units in eight locations: Douglas, Ramsey, Peel, Castletown, Onchan, Port Erin, Port St Mary, and Laxey. The information gathered contributed to the development of an Understanding Manx Places Model, following the methodology of Understanding Scottish Places.

A team from consultancy firm Didobi visited each centre in the Isle of Man, engaging with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents. This work was supplemented by telephone interviews with developers and investors. The project concluded with an evaluation of each location using an analysis model named the “Place Standard Tool”. This allowed for each place to be assessed according to 14 “quality of place metrics” and offered a structured framework for discussions on physical and social aspects of a place, facilitating informed decision-making.

The recommendations provided within the Town Audit review have influenced the strategic goals and actions this Strategy proposes and will guide the ongoing work of the Department for Enterprise. Audit Reports are available to other stakeholder bodies, such as Local Authorities, to enable them to plan effectively and to make informed decisions. Town Audit recommendations include:

- Ensure that each town and village has a vision and plan that is aligned to the Island Plan so they create complimentary and not competing offers.
- Focus on improving Douglas as the Island’s capital city.
- Create a strong business start-up offer through grants, mentoring and business space to encourage and support entrepreneurship.
- Look at ways of fostering social capital between the towns, villages and Douglas through encouraging the level and style of leadership that is happening in Castletown along with engagement with communities and stakeholders whose views are acted upon.

Place assessment charts can be found in Appendix 3.



LOCAL AUTHORITY FEEDBACK

The Island’s Local Authorities were consulted in preparation for this Strategy, and their feedback is summarised below:

- A lack of staffing and access to funding has limited the progression of locally-focused initiatives.
- Levels of integration between Local Authorities and other stakeholders across the Island are inconsistent.
- Lack of building upkeep and unrealistic rental values has led to frustration.
- Anchor tenants are crucial and highly valued.
- Effective marketing of local areas is important.
- The long-term establishment of The Domestic Event Fund has been positively received.
- The closure of high street businesses has raised concerns.
- Local Authority spending is subject to high levels of scrutiny which limits risk taking.
- Greater synergy and integration is required across the Island’s towns/villages and their respective Local Authorities.
- Increased working from home has led to new opportunities including the possibility to encourage people to remain in town centres and work in co-working environments.

07 STRATEGIC PILLARS, GOALS AND ACTIONS



3 PILLARS & 20 STRATEGIC GOALS

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE MANAGEMENT	2. ENTERPRISE & CONSUMER EXPERIENCE	3. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & PARTNERSHIPS
<p>1.1 Transform Underused and Vacant Spaces</p> <p>1.2 Invigorate High Streets and Catalyse Vibrancy</p>	<p>2.1 Encourage Consumer Choice</p> <p>2.2 Reduce Barriers to Business</p>	<p>3.1 Develop Effective Town Partnerships</p> <p>3.2 Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes</p>
<p>1.3 Encourage Town Centre First Regeneration</p> <p>1.4 Improve Town Centre Accessibility</p> <p>1.5 Support Strategic Planning Policy</p> <p>1.6 Encourage Sustainable Practices</p> <p>1.7 Improve Collaboration to Maximise Business Potential</p> <p>1.8 Enable Place Promotion and Branding</p>	<p>2.3 Foster Entrepreneurship</p> <p>2.4 Support Adaptation to Meet Consumer Demand</p> <p>2.5 Utilise Data-led Decision Making</p> <p>2.6 Enable Businesses to Improve Service Quality</p> <p>2.7 Stimulate the Provision of Entertainment and Leisure Facilities</p>	<p>3.3 Empower Stakeholder Partnerships</p> <p>3.4 Create Open and Clear Communication Channels</p> <p>3.5 Drive Community Engagement</p>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
	Foster and build great communities	Strong & diverse economy	Lead to job creation	Consistent with climate change plan	Local first approach	Stimulate investment	Cater to a broad range of customers

These Strategic Goals seek to address key challenges and seize opportunities.

Six Strategic Goals have been prioritised according to:

1. The significance of the opportunity or challenge they address.
2. The expected effectiveness of Department for Enterprise led initiatives in catalysing positive change.

Strategic goals, objectives and actions were developed following analysis, ranking, and evaluation. This process involved the engagement of the Non Executive Boards of Business Isle of Man and Visit Isle of Man and an exploration of external market forces, wider industry trends and, in certain circumstances, UK Government policy.



Numerous UK strategies and policies were reviewed prior to the development of this Strategy's strategic goals and action.

- The UK Government's 'Build Back Better High Streets' policy paper states "communities are at the heart of place-making; where a mix of commercial and residential uses complement each other; and where businesses large and small feel welcome".
- Scotland's 'Getting the Right Change - retail strategy for Scotland' outlines several principles that are relevant to this Strategy, including the importance of place and the identity and purpose that places can engender.
- The High Street Task Force Annual Report 2022-23 describes local partnerships as key to unlocking high street potential.

PRIORITISATION OF ACTIONS

The actions outlined in the Strategy will be further prioritised throughout the implementation plan based on feedback, anticipated effectiveness, additional consultation, and resource availability.

Actions will be either:

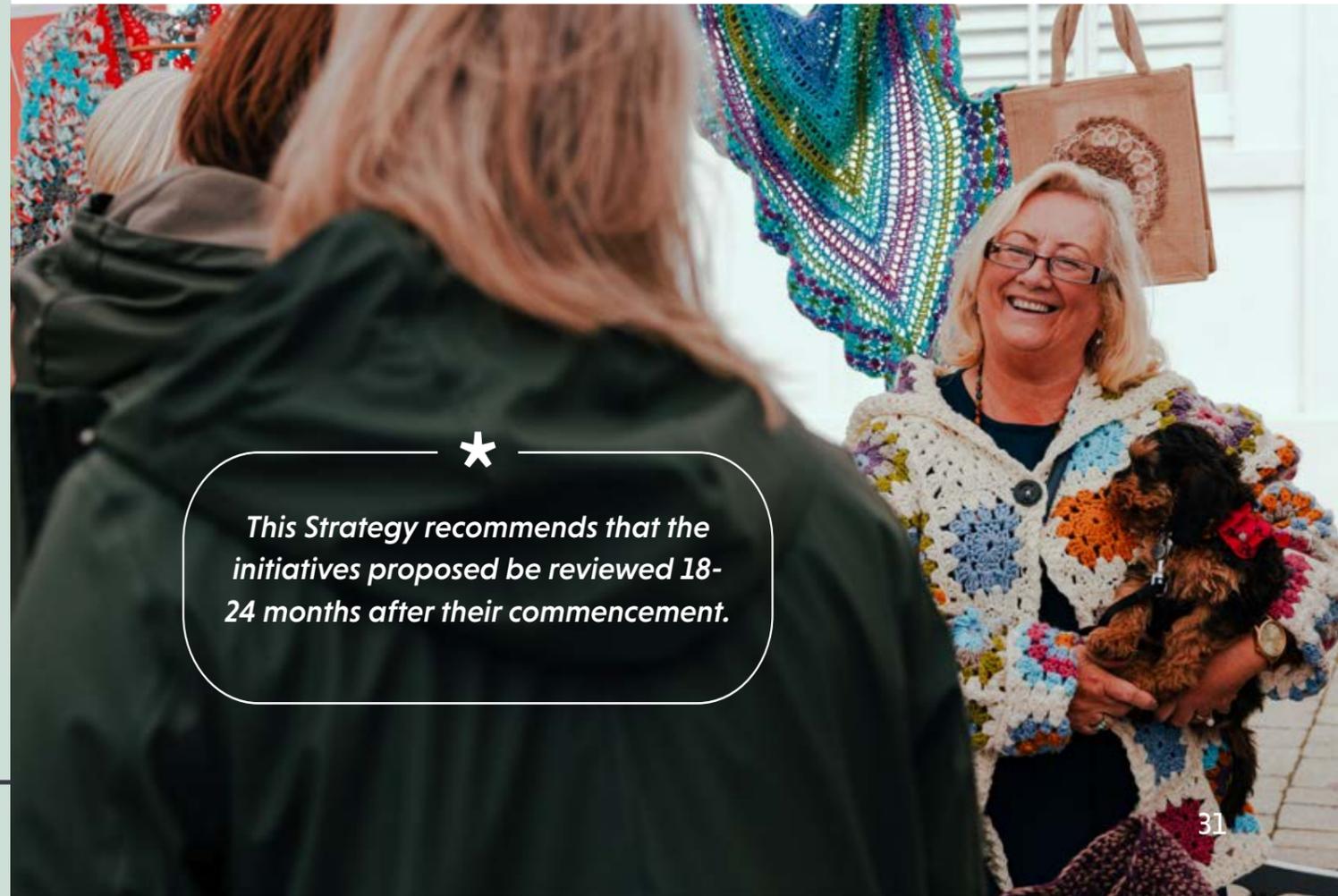
- Included in the Department for Enterprise's on-going activities.
- Introduced via new or expanded support schemes.
- Supported by specific resourcing.
- Supported by the Department for Enterprise to work with other stakeholders and Government Departments to develop policy.

Further details are provided in the Implementation Plan that accompanies this Strategy.

CONTINGENCY PLAN

Within the tables below, the "Contingency Plan" sections highlight actions that may be taken following a review of the initiatives proposed in the Strategy, 18-24 months after their commencement.

This will allow outcomes to be evaluated and assessed against each Strategic Goal.



This Strategy recommends that the initiatives proposed be reviewed 18-24 months after their commencement.

PILLAR 1: INFRASTRUCTURE & PLACE MANAGEMENT

Infrastructure and Place Management involves creating and maintaining physical assets and urban spaces to provide an attractive environment for businesses, residents, and visitors. The Strategic Goals that relate to this pillar include those focussed on strategic planning policy, enhancing underutilised and vacant premises, implementing dynamic public realm interventions, and catalysing public realm improvements, all of which contribute to a vibrant local economy and instill business confidence.

STRATEGIC GOAL	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
1.1 Transform Underused and Vacant Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Re-purpose and incentivise the use of vacant buildings and underutilised town centre sites. b. Develop mechanisms and policy that encourages property owners to fill empty units, reducing long-term vacancies. c. Reduce high-street vacancy rates to increase diversity and support non-retail high street enterprises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support collaboration to fill underutilised spaces, including between property owners, start-ups, independent retailers and social enterprises. Catalyse community-led empty space activation projects, such as pop-up shops, art displays, and exhibitions, to bring long-term vacant commercial units into use. 2. Develop specific support mechanisms to make upper floors in high street properties more usable and, in certain circumstances, convert upper floor units to residential accommodation. 3. Support increased provision of leisure infrastructure, fulfilling consumer demand, and supporting the goal of increasing the economically active population. 4. Support increased provision of leisure infrastructure, fulfilling consumer demand, through attracting private sector investment into Town Centres; filling leisure gaps and meeting business unit requirements (complement work undertaken to fulfil action 2.7.1).
		<p>CONTINGENCY PLAN:</p> <p>Consider alternative mechanisms, including policy and legislation, that could discourage landlords from neglecting premises and leaving units empty for long periods. Policy could differentiate between engaged and unresponsive landlords, and premises that are vacant for an unacceptable period of time could be sold via compulsory auction. The UK has a mechanism to address this issue which places a 12-month minimum occupancy requirement on new owners of units bought through compulsory auctions.</p>

1.2 Invigorate High Streets and Catalyse Vibrancy

- a. Create and support a dynamic and vibrant town centre area by incentivising events, activities and improvements to aesthetics, driven by Local Authorities, business and community groups.
 - 1. Utilise schemes such as the Domestic Event Fund to support events, markets and other initiatives that stimulate high street footfall, and encourage longer dwell times (in support of action 3.5.1).
 - 2. Make events easier to hold; explore changes relating to event licensing and planning permission requirements.
 - 3. Incentivise and support improvements to the public realm with the aim to encourage private sector investment. Review planning policy updates related to temporary event licensing.
 - 4. Work with traders to encourage predictable and coordinated opening hours on the Island's highstreets.
 - 5. Support the development of new attractions in town centres, including those that involve the creative and cultural sectors, providing additional reasons for people to visit and spend time in high streets.

CONTINGENCY PLAN:

Consider greater public sector involvement in coordinating and initiating in-town events and investment in attractions.

Assess whether Government intervention is required to encourage the provision and creation of suitable units.

1.3 Encourage Town Centre Regeneration

- a. Improve regeneration mechanisms to ensure town centre buildings and civic amenities meet the needs of local businesses and consumers.
- b. Improve mechanisms for maintaining and adapting our town centres into attractive and inviting environments to visit, work, and live.
- c. Address the historic lack of regeneration funding in the Isle of Man, which has led to a decline in townscape quality in some areas.
 - 1. Relaunch an updated Town and Village Regeneration Scheme.
 - 2. Collaborate with Department of Infrastructure (DOI) and Local Authorities regarding future regeneration works to ensure businesses are involved early in decision-making processes.
 - 3. Incentivise the regeneration of public spaces including public streets, squares, and parks.

<p>1.4 Improve Town Centre Accessibility</p>	<p>a. Review current accessibility in town centres focusing on the provision of public and private transport routes, ensuring they are maximised for ease of access to improve connectivity.</p> <p>b. Support the achievement of the Island Plan goal of creating a well-connected Island where streets and places are inclusive, easy to navigate, safe, and healthy.</p> <p>c. Work in a manner that is consistent with the Isle of Man Climate Change Plan 2022-27.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support town centre projects that address the Island’s environmental and sustainability related objectives such as car charging points and cycling facilities. Ensure schemes are aligned to existing car parking/active travel strategies. Ensure parking provision is appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the Local Economy Strategy by reviewing existing policies and informing policy development. Support stakeholders, such as local authorities, to resolve specific challenges related to parking and accessibility by discussing solutions, advising of prospective funding routes, and liaising with relevant public sector bodies and private sector organisations. Prioritise the support of accessible built environment features by, for example, tackling insufficient drop kerbs and poor pavement conditions and reducing road and pavement contrasts. Support policy that makes the town centre more walkable, accessible, and signposted.
---	---	--

<p>1.5 Support Strategic Planning Policy</p>	<p>a. Support planning policy that facilitates the application of a town centre-first approach to development and to ensure retail, leisure, and hospitality is concentrated in town centres where possible.</p> <p>b. Ensure planning policy provides for changing consumer and business demands and leads to future-ready high streets.</p> <p>c. Boost footfall and fill vacant premises in town centres and high streets.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake evidenced based review of planning policy related to high street properties and “change of use” regulations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permitted development rights to allow changes from retail to leisure. - Policies that relate to the conversion of upper floor retail and hospitality units to residential property. Support planning policy that encourages vibrant urban centres; communicate these policies effectively to stakeholders. <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The locating of services (education, healthcare, and civic amenities) into town centres, where appropriate and with consideration given to the characteristics of the urban environment. - The locating of retail in town centres, where practicable, supporting planning policy, such as Strategic Policy 9 and Business Policy 5.
---	---	--

<p>1.6 Encourage Sustainable Practices</p>	<p>a. Transform town centres whilst mindful of environmental responsibilities including sustainable transport initiatives, cutting transport pollution in high streets, championing energy-efficient construction, sustainable urban regeneration and promoting cleaner and healthier environments for all.</p> <p>b. Work undertaken to fulfil the Vision of this Strategy should contribute effectively towards the Isle of Man’s plan to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and be consistent with our status as a biosphere nation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing Government schemes, such as the Business Emissions Saving Scheme and the Business Improvement Scheme, to support investment that will lead to long-term cost savings and improved environmental practices. Ensure any new schemes developed to meet the goals detailed in this Strategy have sustainable practices at their core through the considered evaluation of the delivery mechanisms proposed and outcomes expected. In particular, advance policies that reduce the need for consumers to travel long distances to access the goods and services they are seeking. Support a local-first approach that enables residents to purchase goods and services locally.
---	---	---

<p>1.7 Improve Collaboration to Maximise Business Potential</p>	<p>a. Support local businesses to maximise footfall and revenues throughout the year and to take advantage of peak footfall periods and visitor spend.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Visit Isle of Man to raise awareness of coach trips, cruise visits, and other key tourism events that businesses can target and cater for. Develop a calendar of events to be held across the Island that will improve the vibrancy of local areas, attract people into town centres, maximising competition and maximising opportunities for creative and innovative retail, leisure and hospitality businesses.
--	--	---

1.8 Enable Place Promotion and Branding

- a. Encourage and incentivise stakeholders to invest in place marketing, promotion, and branding and to raise awareness of the unique selling points of each town and urban area.
 - b. Encourage the promotion of towns and urban areas as distinctive attractions in their own right.
1. Assist relevant stakeholders, including Businesses, Local Authorities, and community groups, to identify and advertise the unique selling points and core values of their respective towns and urban areas to build distinctive Town Plans and Town Visions, with residents, businesses, consumers, and visitors in mind.
 2. Build on the Town Audit reports produced to inform this Strategy with the aim of identifying priorities and developing consensus across all stakeholders. This may involve promoting features such as historical landmarks, cultural attractions, natural beauty, local businesses, or community events (supported by action 3.5.2).
 3. Continue to undertake “Shop Local” campaigns and marketing activities to raise awareness of the variety of local retail, leisure, and hospitality business on the Island and highlight distinctive town features.



PILLAR 2: ENTERPRISE & CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

Action taken under the Enterprise and Consumer Experience pillar will support the Local Economy Strategy by nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship while focusing on delivering products, services and experiences that meet consumer needs.

STRATEGIC GOAL	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
2.1 Encourage Increased Consumer Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stimulate high street transition in support of the Island’s ambition to attract a younger, diverse population. b. Identify products, services, and brands that would appeal to existing and potential Island residents and are complementary to the existing local business ecosystem. c. Catalyse diversity in the night-time economy and support businesses in their efforts to attract customers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support local businesses to provide the products and brands that are currently underrepresented on the Isle of Man and to satisfy the demand for brands and products evidenced in the public consultation undertaken to inform this Strategy. 2. Introduce schemes that support the economic strength of the night-time economy, encourage variety and vibrancy in this sub-sector and improve business confidence. 3. In recognition of their importance, prioritise engagement with anchor tenants and ensure they are aware of the support schemes available to them.
	<p>CONTINGENCY PLAN:</p> <p>Benchmark the Isle of Man’s retail, hospitality, and leisure offerings against comparable areas to determine the extent to which local businesses are creating a more varied and complete retail offering, and underrepresented brands and products are becoming more widely available.</p> <p>Adjust schemes and promotional activity if the desired outcomes have not been achieved; consider refocussing to attract non-local businesses to achieve more choice through the increased presence of multiples.</p>	



2.2 Reduce Barriers to Business

- a. Alleviate obstacles to business operations including Isle of Man specific challenges.
 - b. Support business transition to enable businesses to provide services in high street locations.
 - c. Ensure Government processes are efficient.
 - d. Incentivise investment in technology.
 - e. Reduce staffing-related challenges.
1. Incentivise landlords and business owners to modernise retail, hospitality, and leisure premises. Support businesses to invest in their interiors to enhance customer experience, improve service quality, modernise their stores, rejuvenate their brand assets, improve their environmental and economic sustainability, and enhance the aesthetic appeal of their stores, hospitality venues, and leisure facilities.
 2. Remove obstacles to growth and innovation such as banking services, payment providers and access to funding.
 3. Improve Government-led stakeholder communication and ensure processes related to relevant services, such as planning and grant support, are efficient and understood.
 4. Provide support for businesses to invest in digital and technological infrastructure, providing opportunities for improving customer service and increasing efficiencies.
 5. Lead campaigns and launch initiatives to alleviate staffing challenges during peak times and to promote careers in retail, leisure, and hospitality (complimenting action 2.6.2).

CONTINGENCY PLAN:

Increase the accountability of financial service providers to ensure businesses that are essential to a thriving local economy are effectively served.

Consider launching schemes aimed at combining units or redeveloping brownfield sites to create units that match the requirements of modern retailers and leisure sector businesses.

★

Support businesses to invest in their interiors to enhance customer experience, improve service quality, modernise their stores...

2.3 Foster Entrepreneurship

- a. Create and support an entrepreneurial environment within the town centres, allowing new and diversifying businesses to innovate.
1. Create opportunities for micro-businesses and start-ups that will re-energise and revitalise underutilised and vacant spaces.
 2. Repurpose vacant high street units by creating innovative incubator spaces that attract local entrepreneurs.
 3. Encourage businesses seeking to build on their experience in schemes such as the Micro Business Grant Scheme; in particular support the rental of empty units through the Domestic Event Fund.

2.4 Support Adaptation to Meet Consumer Demand

- a. Enable town centre businesses to adapt to changes in consumer preferences, and plan for future consumer habits.
1. Encourage growth in high street diversification and rise in experience based high street retail or leisure. Encourage the development of multi-channel retail where an online presence would support the financial health of the high-street businesses.
 2. Facilitate the provision of business advice allowing local businesses to assess opportunities and react to changes in consumer preferences and spending habits.

2.5 Utilise Data-led Decision Making

- a. Create, support, and provide data, including consumer insights, to businesses to enable them to make informed decisions and identify and capitalise on opportunities in the local economy through informed decision-making.
1. Provide regular data extract reports to local businesses including metrics such as footfall, vacancy rates, and demographics to support decision-making.
 2. Collect, collate, and publish benchmarking and comparative analysis data providing insights into the characteristics of Manx residents and the retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors on the Isle of Man. Collate and store data in an accessible and usable data depository.



2.6 Enable Businesses to Improve Quality of Service

- a. Support businesses to improve the quality of service they provide.
 1. Facilitate the provision of training services to ensure staff can offer high standards of customer service, are knowledgeable, skilled, and motivated.
 2. Support businesses in attracting high-calibre employees (complementing action 2.6.2).

2.7 Stimulate the Provision of Entertainment and Leisure Facilities

- a. Provide a pathway for entertainment and leisure businesses, and those seeking to build relevant premises and infrastructure, to invest effectively.
 1. Complete a review of large-scale vacant sites to determine the viability of investment and the likelihood of entrepreneurship. Take subsequent action to address any issues identified and encourage development.
 2. De-risk entrepreneurship through schemes that include underwriting and / or capital cost reduction provisions. All investment to be evaluated through targets and key performance indicators including footfall and new openings (support action 1.1.3).

PILLAR 3: LOCAL EMPOWERMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

This pillar focuses on bringing vibrancy to town centres and high streets through the provision of dedicated resources, new funding routes, support for effective local partnerships and mechanisms to allow increased community involvement in decision-making.

STRATEGIC GOAL	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
3.1 Develop Effective Town Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Amplify the value of local trader groups, ensuring local stakeholders are given greater power in the decision-making process and can be active drivers of town centre development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide targeted support to develop, launch and strengthen partnerships and stakeholder networks to help build business confidence. Take action through outreach and engagement to ensure the Island’s eight largest economic areas are represented by local trade partnerships or networks: supporting collaboration and communication. 2. Work with stakeholders to establish appropriate civic organisations to drive positive local change.

CONTINGENCY PLAN:
 Introduce new organisations and partnership initiatives, such as Town Boards, which may reflect the Executive Agency Board model and are retail, hospitality, and leisure sector focussed.

3.2 Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes

- a. Encourage and motivate local leadership.
 - b. Empower and instil ownership amongst stakeholders.
1. Create new funding routes, and enhance existing schemes, such as the Domestic Event Fund and the Town and Village Regeneration Scheme, that will enable Local Authorities to action projects that deliver improvements to town centres.

CONTINGENCY PLAN:
 Engage Local Authorities to determine the changes that may be required to ensure funds are spent effectively.

<p>3.3 Empower Stakeholder Partnerships</p>	<p>a. Improve the planning and coordination of town centre-focussed events across the Island to ensure they complement and not compete with each other.</p> <p>b. Maximise the positive impact of stakeholder collaboration and the generation of new ideas.</p>	<p>1. Support trader networks and stakeholder groups to run projects, initiatives, and events and stimulate economic activity; providing access to funding to enable Local Authorities to utilise the resources they require.</p> <p>For example Town Centre Managers could constitute a dedicated resource to plan and run events and other activities. Managers could also liaise with multiple stakeholder groups, communicate with businesses and residents and feedback to government.</p>
<p>3.4 Create Open and Clear Communication Channels</p>	<p>a. Create an environment where communication between government, businesses, and consumers is open and constructive.</p>	<p>1. Build on the work completed by the Local Business Executive within Business Isle of Man to create an open door into the Isle of Man Government and reach previously unengaged business owners.</p> <p>2. Facilitate the creation of new groups and industry bodies, such as Hospitality Isle of Man where representation is currently lacking to ensure two-way communication channels.</p>
<p>3.5 Drive Community Engagement</p>	<p>a. Promote local identity, civic pride, and social buy-in.</p> <p>b. Encourage community ownership and community-led high street initiatives.</p>	<p>1. Enable and facilitate community-led initiatives in high streets, such as community markets, cultural events, and art installations (supported by action 1.2.1).</p> <p>2. Actively promote a sense of social identity and pride among residents by supporting and encouraging community-driven projects and community-led developments (in support of action 1.8.1).</p> <p>3. Provide frameworks and pathways for greater community involvement in decision-making and the identification of community needs, aiming to reach stakeholder consensus and to provide a platform for all stakeholders, including community groups, Government Departments and Local Authorities, to deliver agreed programmes.</p>



08 IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

Several principles will inform and influence the implementation of this Strategy:

1. Guiding Principles:

Work undertaken to implement this Strategy should be completed in a manner that is consistent with the Strategy’s guiding principles.

2. Integrated Government:

Several actions this Strategy proposes require the support and collaboration of other Government Departments and the exchange of information and ideas. The Department for Enterprise will endeavour to work with other Government Departments to communicate the Strategy’s Strategic Goals and to gain their support in implementing initiatives and fulfilling objectives.

3. Adaptable Implementation and Local Authority Empowerment:

As detailed in the consultation and engagement section, the Town Audit Reports produced to inform this Strategy highlighted differences that exist between towns and urban areas across the Isle of Man. The actions proposed within this Strategy provide mechanisms and structures for businesses, stakeholders and Local Authorities to address challenges and seize opportunities. They do not impose solutions on stakeholders, including Local Authorities, or advocate for rigid restrictions regarding the specific projects they undertake or the nature of the solutions they implement.

4. Monitoring and Feedback:

Business Isle of Man will monitor progress against the targets detailed in the Targets and Monitoring section of this Strategy. The initiatives, schemes, and projects that stem from the proposed actions will be adjusted according to feedback and as per their effectiveness. While this Strategy’s goals will remain the same, stakeholder feedback will inform the implementation of this Strategy and the criteria and characteristics of initiatives, schemes, and projects. The guidance of the Business Isle of Man Board will be instrumental in this process.

5. Short-term and Long-term Objectives:

While several schemes, projects, and initiatives that are introduced or expanded as a result of this Strategy will enable investment within a relatively short time frame, adapting and developing cross-governmental policy and updating and modernising infrastructure and physical assets will require more time. Where physical infrastructure is concerned, sustained investment, and regular maintenance are required over a longer period of time to ensure our high streets and town centres have a high-quality offering.

ADAPTABLE IMPLEMENTATION AND LOCAL AUTHORITY EMPOWERMENT

The Isle of Man has some well-established and professionally managed Trader Groups and Chambers of Commerce who meet regularly to discuss local issues and opportunities. There are, however, businesses in certain localities that do not have access to such organisations, resulting in a lack of dialogue, poor communications, and a lack of awareness regarding events, activities, and schemes, whether they are public or private sector-led. It is imperative that each town centre has a proactive and engaged group of local representatives that can champion initiatives and bring forward change.

Features and focus areas for these existing and new partnerships could be:

- Support with the development of events and funding bids.
- Enabling access to funding schemes.
- Support Local Authorities and encourage the engagement of MHKs, Town Clerks, Government Departments and other key stakeholders.
- Assistance in building consensus regarding ‘Town Visions’ and time-bound plans.

All of the Island’s urban areas are distinct and have their own character, heritage, and townscapes. Douglas, for instance, has a strong retail offering with large multi national chains yet lacks both leisure venues and a strong traders association to drive events. Castletown has a thriving leisure offering however the town has experienced poor footfall figures at certain times and at times retailers feel disconnected from other stakeholders.

This Strategy has an adaptable implementation plan. While the Strategy presents a single vision, it is imperative that individual stakeholders have a say in the future of their urban areas and high streets. The initiatives this Strategy will result in will provide businesses with the tools to initiate positive change in a manner suited to their areas.



Town Audits were produced to aid the development of the Local Economy Strategy. These reports provided suggestions for Local Authorities and other stakeholders to consider. A selection of these are detailed below. These audits have stimulated discussion and debate related to potential improvements in the Island’s urban landscape.

Peel

- Invest in and implement marketing activities to promote Peel as a cultural and historic centre.
- Establish a traders group and increase communication/ engagement.

Port Erin

- Build on leisure and visitor offering through investment in facilities and amenities.
- Launch initiatives to address Church Street dilapidation.

Port St Mary

- Increase marketing support and liaison with Visit Isle of Man to enable traders to take advantage of visitor footfall.

Castletown

- Take steps to repurpose landmark vacant buildings.
- Promote the town as a hub for events and activation initiatives.
- Build on the work undertaken to enable start-up businesses.

Ramsey

- Focus on creating a new ‘heart of the town’ project to raise the quality of Market Place.
- Promote independent shops and local businesses as Ramsey’s key characteristics.
- Address long-term vacant sites on Parliament Street and West Quay.

Laxey

- Improve signage and connections between upper and lower Laxey.
- Ensure visitor attractions are consistently maintained to sustain or increase footfall.

Onchan

- Support improvements to shopfronts and building facades.
- Encourage increased leisure provision for larger resident population and visitors (possibly invest in Onchan Park).

Douglas

- Focus on improving variety and choice across the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors, building on city status.
- Increase leisure provision in the heart of Douglas.
- Support greater stakeholder leadership in Douglas, increasing engagement with local and national retailers.



RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed funding routes and schemes have been guided by analysis undertaken to inform this Strategy and a review of relevant existing and previous schemes.

Feedback relating to this Strategy’s goals and objectives will determine:

- The intended outcomes of each of these schemes and associated targets.
- The criteria that applicants are required to meet for

accessing any related grant funding.

- Monitoring and control processes.
- The investment projects or expenditure that grant funding could be utilised for.
- The Department for Enterprise resources that are required to administer these schemes and the related administrative processes.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Proposed funding mechanisms would include:

1. The expansion and promotion of schemes such as the **Town and Village Regeneration Scheme** that provide scope for retail, leisure, and hospitality businesses to invest in their premises.
2. The introduction of new schemes, or the extension of existing schemes, to cover support for technology and efficiency related businesses improvements. These may include training related investments, investment in point-of-sale equipment, digitalisation and modernisation, and investment in digital services such as accounting software.
3. The creation of a **Local Economy Fund** accessible to Local Authorities and Trader Groups. This fund will reduce the risk of innovation and will allow stakeholder organisations to trial and test new concepts or ideas. Such a fund has the potential to breathe new life into the Island’s high streets and to contribute considerably to achieving this Strategy’s goals.

This fund would also offer Local Authorities the opportunity to fund additional personnel such as Town Centre Managers could support event planning, coordinate, and facilitate trader groups. Managers could also complete projects to increase the visual appeal of high streets and encourage vibrancy.

Support schemes will be introduced to catalyse the development of “Town Visions” and encourage the creation of community-led town boards. Funds

could be utilised for administrative support, to assist with the cost of community engagement activities, to enable consultancy and allow for research to be undertaken.

This scheme could also support an increase in marketing and promotional activities. Funding would provide for the development of distinctive marketing assets and selling points, preventing areas from competing directly for visitors seeking similar experiences, and enabling the creation of diverse, Island-wide retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

4. The extension and broadening of the **Domestic Event Fund**, to stimulate, catalyse and de-risk events that stimulate high street footfall and encourage longer dwell times. The Domestic Event Fund will include the provision for supporting businesses seeking to lease vacant premises and launch or trial business concepts or types that are lacking in a given area. The Domestic Event Fund will also continue to support vibrancy in urban areas by supporting the development of events that drive footfall.
5. The promotion and increased targeting of existing schemes, such as the **Business Emissions Saving Scheme** and the **Business Improvement Scheme**, to improve efficiency, productivity, product development, and customer service in the retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors, supporting applicants throughout the application process.

09 TARGETS AND MONITORING

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

Business Isle of Man will lead the implementation of this Strategy, liaising with stakeholders and benefiting from the oversight of the Department for Enterprise Political Membership and private sector feedback via the Business Isle of Man Board.

After an 18 to 24-month period, an assessment will be made regarding the suitability of this Strategy's defined actions and their success in achieving its goals. Business Isle of Man will undertake this assessment with the support of the Business Isle of Man Board. Should any actions be deemed ineffective, alternate actions will be developed and put into practice.



OUTCOMES

This Strategy's ultimate outcome will be the achievement of each Strategic Goal and the fulfilment of the Strategy's Vision. To monitor the effectiveness of actions in achieving these goals, the Department for Enterprise will monitor a series of metrics. These metrics will indicate the impact of the Strategy's implementation.

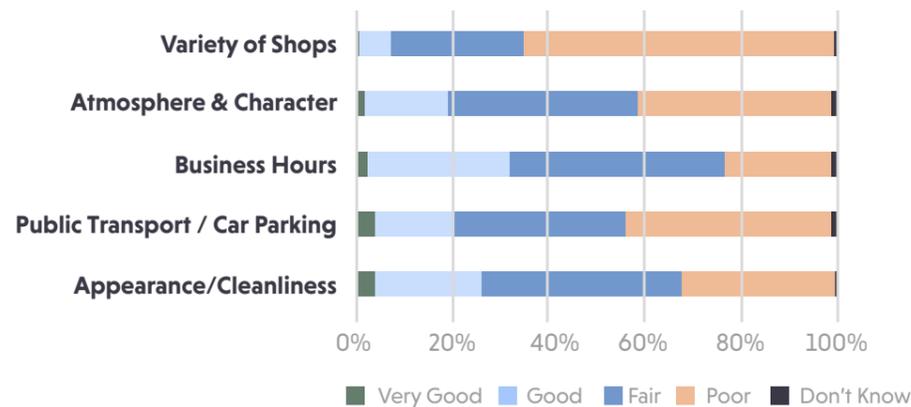
The fulfilment of the Strategic Goals will be monitored through regular data collection. Outcomes and data collection methods are detailed below, and more comprehensive information is provided within the implementation plan that accompanies this Strategy.

- **Increased footfall** - measured by footfall counters positioned in key locations across the Island's urban centres. Additional footfall counters will expand data visibility to the largest retail areas and high streets.
- **Reduced vacancy rates** - measured by independent surveys, such as those carried out by the Local Data Company to inform this Strategy. Analysis of all Island units by type and vacancy which will occur on an annual basis to track changes to the make-up of the Island's Local Economy.
- **Improved Local Economy Survey scores** - measured by Local Economy and High Street Survey which will be undertaken on a regular basis. In particular, an improvement in leisure and retail related metrics will be targeted.
- **The fulfilment of the Island's demographic targets as detailed in the Isle of Man Economic Strategy and Island Plan** - measured by Statistics Isle of Man and independent surveys and research such as Consumer and Demographic Data Reporting. The Economic Dashboard produced by Economic Advisory will also offer tool to measure change and impact.
- **The avoidance of sector employment decline** - measured by Statistics Isle of Man through data provided within the Quarterly Economic and Statistical Update.
- **An improvement in the attributes of the Island's towns and urban areas** - measured by research, surveys, stakeholder engagement, and independent research, such as Town Audit reports.
- **Regular engagement and consultation with relevant stakeholders**, such as the Isle of Man Government Climate Change Team, will allow the Department for Enterprise to gauge the extent to which the implementation of this Strategy is positively impacting on the Isle of Man's decarbonisation targets.
- **Business Confidence Surveys will be utilised to gauge the extent to which business owners feel that the Strategy is positively impacting the health of their businesses.** Regular stakeholder engagement, public surveys, workshops and outreach work will be undertaken to monitor progress towards all Strategic Goals, including those relating to reducing barriers to business, customer choice, quality of service and adaptation. Certain actions may be completed by the delivery or amendment of Government policy; an implementation plan will provide additional detail.

10 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – LOCAL ECONOMY AND HIGH STREET SURVEY AND IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

How would you rate the following aspects of Douglas’s retail areas?

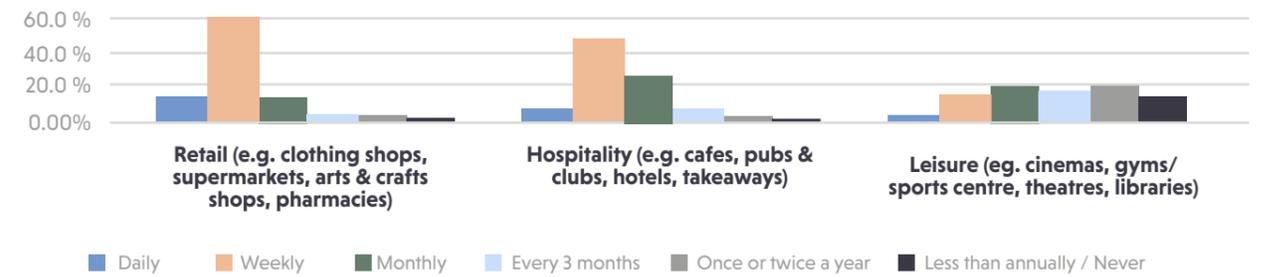


How would you rate the following aspects of Douglas's retail areas out of 5?



Douglas was rated average for most related attributes including cleanliness, accessibility, atmosphere, and character. The city received a slightly poorer score regarding business hours and a higher score regarding the variety of stores.

How often do you visit these types of premises in the Isle of Man?



57% of respondents stated that they visited retail premises on a weekly basis. Almost 50% of respondents stated they visit hospitality businesses on a weekly basis. Less than 50% of respondents stated they visited leisure facilities on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

If shops opened later, would you be more likely to visit the high street after 6pm?

YES 50.37%
NO 49.63%



Do you enjoy High Street Shopping?

20%
Agree or Strongly Agree



People should shop local to help the Manx Economy

75%
Agree or Strongly Agree



Appearance and Cleanliness of Strand Street

26%
Good or Very Good

Rating of the Isle of Man's Retail Offering



Rating of the Isle of Man's Leisure Offering



Rating of the Isle of Man's Hospitality Offering



APPENDIX 2 – LOCAL DATA COMPANY PREMISES SURVEYS

Comparison of Multiple vs Independent providers

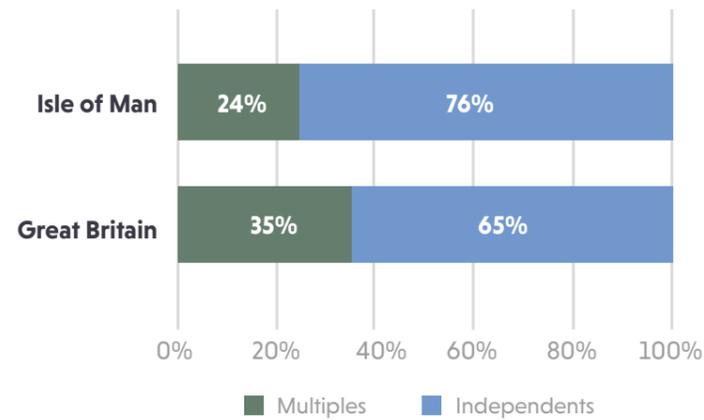
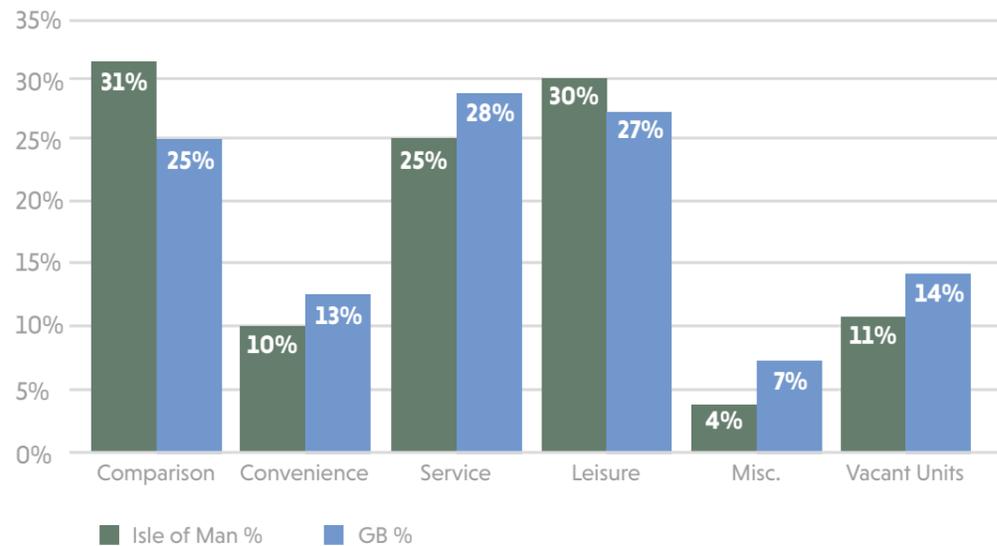


Figure 2: Vacancy Rate by Town (LDC)

Comparison of premises types - Isle of Man vs. GB



Classifications definitions

Comparison Goods are shops selling non-perishable goods, including fashion, homewares and electricals.
 Convenience includes food and beverage shops, including supermarkets, convenience stores, bakers and butchers.
 Service includes banks, hairdressing, laundrettes and locksmiths.
 Leisure includes restaurants, bars, cafes, fast food and hotels.

The Isle of Man has a higher percent of ‘comparison’ and ‘leisure’ premises types compared to Great Britain. It has a lower percentage in ‘convenience’, ‘service’, ‘miscellaneous’ and ‘vacant units’ compared to Great Britain.

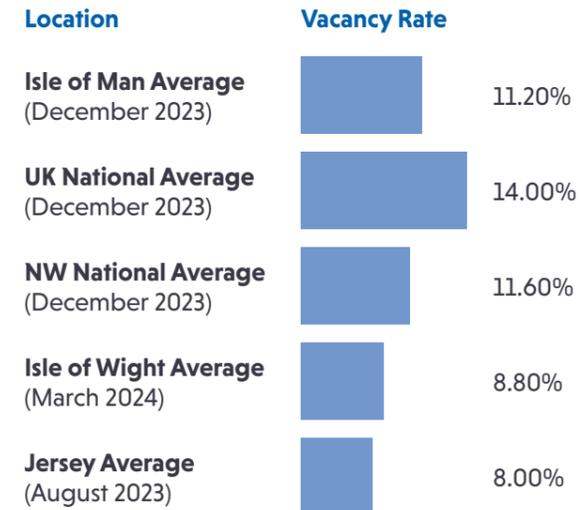
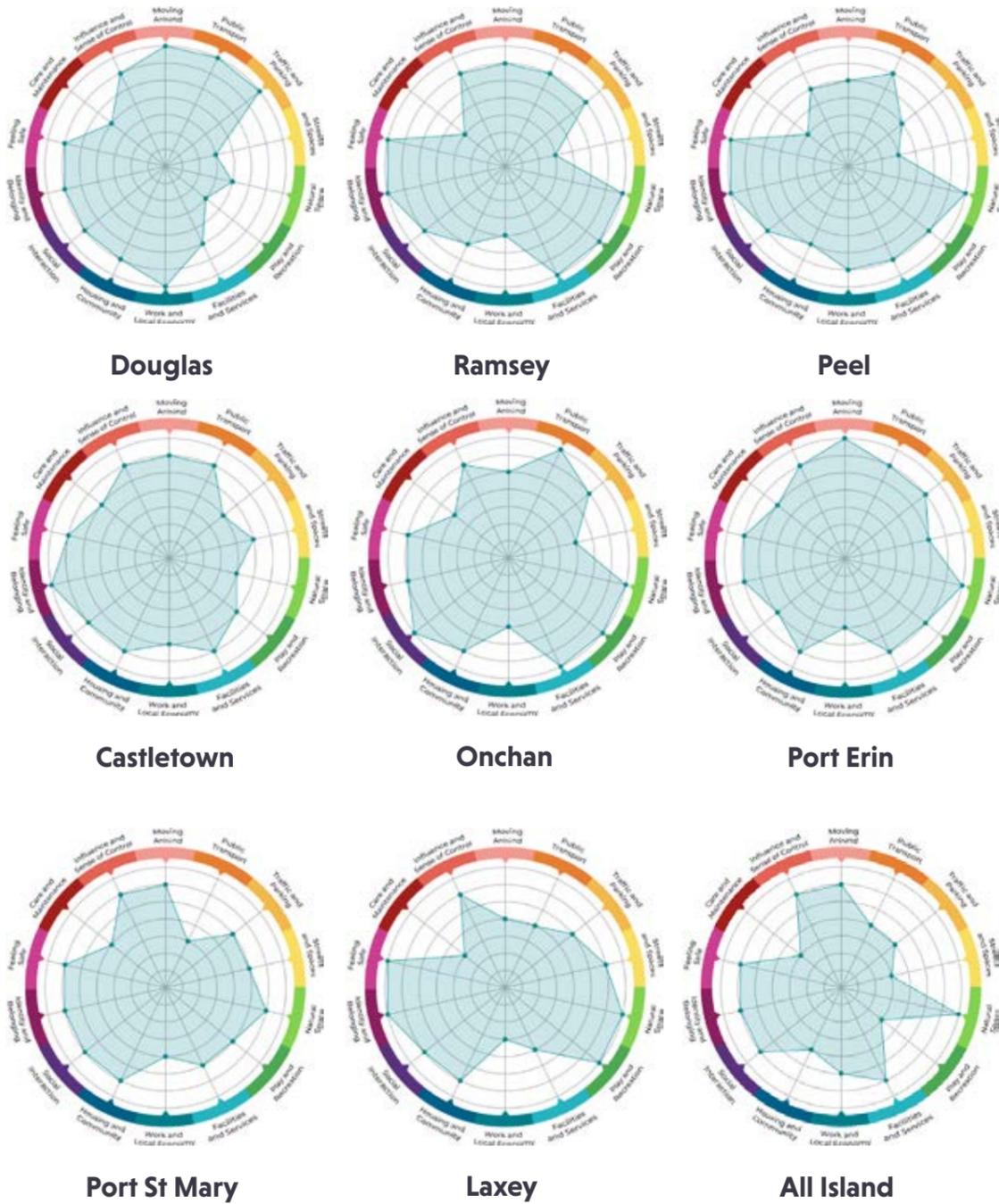


Figure 2: National Vacancy Comparison

The data shows that there are clear differences between each of the Island’s high streets and town centres. Douglas and Port Erin for example, have vacancy rates below the UK national average, whereas Castletown and Ramsey have rates higher than average.

APPENDIX 3 – TOWN AUDITS

Island wide comparison of the "Place Standard Framework" which assesses the quality of a place across 14 unique areas.





St Georges Court, Upper Church Street, Douglas, Isle of Man IM1 1EX
E: contact-business@gov.im

businessisleofman.com

