

Heritage Services Business Plan 2026–2031

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1. Summary

The Heritage Services Business Plan 2026-2031 outlines the Service's strategic vision and mission as we adapt to a challenging economic landscape and continue to deliver key Council corporate priorities.

The Service anticipates continued growth in visitors at the Roman Baths in the 26/27 financial year. This will lead to increases in income and profit. Heritage Services is projected to deliver a financial surplus of £13.269 million in 2026/27.

This financial success is built on investment in staff and the heritage assets that we care for alongside prudent cost management and entrepreneurial approaches to pricing and revenue generation. There will be two main strands to drive footfall at the Roman Baths. The first is to focus on attracting more international visitors through marketing and relationship building within the travel trade market. The second is to increase domestic visitation by improving the value of a visit to the Baths when compared to competing attractions. This will include considering new pricing options, introducing new programming and making the depth of experience available at the site more central to our communications.

Heritage Services will match this commercial activity with a continued commitment to delivering social value impact across our activities. These are aligned with core Council strategies including the Economic and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These activities will centre on the continued use of our dedicated learning and community engagement spaces at the Victoria Art Gallery and Clore Learning Centre as hubs for learning and participation in the heart of Bath. We will also continue to invest in and grow our successful volunteer programme.

26/27 will also see us strengthen our approach to supporter engagement. Primarily this will be through the ongoing implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The relationships with the independent charities that support us will be deepened and we will work in partnership with them to ensure we benefit from philanthropic contributions to our activities.

Operational efficiency will be measured through benchmarking within the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) and a review of the governance structure will update the operating arrangements for the Service within the Council. Focus will increasingly be placed

on environmental sustainability and this report is accompanied by the Service's first ever Environmental Action Plan. As always, the Service will focus on the safety, security and conservation of the buildings and collections in our care. This was demonstrated in 2025 when a proportion of the Bath Record Office collection was re-located to more suitable storage. In 2026 we will move the majority of our reserve collections associated with the Roman Baths to a more suitable location also.

The relocation of the Fashion Museum to the Old Post Office remains the Service's flagship capital project. The Museum's departure from Bath's historic Assembly Rooms in 2022 created a rare opportunity to establish a bold, pioneering museum that reflects the significance of one of the world's leading fashion collections. This development exemplifies the Service's priorities—audience engagement, research excellence, collections care, social value, and financial sustainability. In 2026, the project will focus on securing substantial funding, alongside obtaining planning permission and listed building consent.

The Service's current strategy period ends in 2027. Cast in 2022 in the immediate post-covid world much has now changed. As such, the Service will begin to consider its strategy for the period 2028 – 2033 in the 26/27 financial year. This will take into account the changing context that the Service operates in and look forward to the opening of the Fashion Museum in 2030.

We are proud to be a Service that is part of B&NES and everything we do is dedicated to delivering on the purpose, principles, commitments and priorities of the Council. This is evident throughout the content of this plan.

2. Service Vision and Mission

2.1. Bath and North East Somerset [Corporate Strategy](#)

Heritage Services is dedicated to the delivery of Council Corporate priorities via the preservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of Bath and North East Somerset. Through strategic investments, innovative initiatives, and a commitment to sustainability, we aim to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and contribute to the region's economic and social prosperity.

Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) has one overriding purpose – to improve people's lives.

The Corporate Strategy has nine priorities for the period 2023-2027. Heritages Services feels that it can contribute significantly to 7 of these through its current and future activities:

- Clean, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods - working with local communities to promote civic pride and preventative approaches
- Support for vulnerable adults and children – securing safe, effective services that meet the needs of our changing population
- Delivering for our children and young people – working with our partners to narrow the early years attainment gap
- Healthy lives and places – working with health and other partners to tackle inequalities, promote healthy places, and support people to live healthier lives
- Good jobs - aiming to increase the median wage in a regenerative economy
- Skills to thrive - an inclusive economy where prosperity is shared
- Cultural life - valuing and developing its contribution to Bath and North East Somerset.

To this end we will be aligning a lot of the work we undertake against key Council strategies. Primarily the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) and the [Economic Strategy](#) with the data contained with the [Strategic Evidence Base](#) underpinning how we direct many of our activities. With the emergence of the West of England Combined Authority's [Growth Strategy](#) we will also begin to align our operations with the outcomes envisaged for the region as a whole. Finally, 2026 will also see the adoption of the Council's Cultural Development Plan in which the work of Heritage Services is paramount.

2.2. Vision

A document outlining the Service's strategy 2022 – 2027 can be found [here](#).

The Service's vision is to: **Learn from the past, understand the present, shape the future**

There are three over-arching aims to achieve between now and 2030:

- Return the Service to pre-COVID profitability;
- Move the Fashion Museum
- Achieve Net Zero.

2.3. Mission

The Service's Mission is to:

- Create memorable, relevant and emotionally charged experiences for local, national and international audiences;
- Conserve the monument, buildings and collections in our care;
- Be supporter centric – building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with people who engage with us;
- Act commercially to generate significant income from our activities and work to contribute to the wider economic prosperity of the region;
- Offer an unparalleled customer experience for everyone;
- Be a leader in sustainable and responsible practice in the Museums, Heritage and Archive sector.

2.4. Strategic Priorities

The Service has six strategic priorities which it will deliver on over the course of the Plan:

1. To provide maximum access to our buildings, monuments and collection to as wide an audience as possible to facilitate learning, understanding and emotional connection;
2. To be a supporter focussed organisation;
3. To maximise income;
4. To operate efficiently and effectively as an organisation;
5. To bring benefit to Bath, the South-West and the UK;
6. To act as an environmentally sustainable and responsible organisation in everything we do.

3. Business Strategy

3.1. Performance Overview

Roman Baths

Visitor numbers at the Roman Baths have been lower than budgeted in 2025/26. The Service set a budget for 10% growth in visitors during this financial year. Across the year there has been minimal growth with overall visitor numbers down 2% financial year-to-date (end of December 2025). This is the continuation of a trend experienced in the second half 24/25 and the Service has proactively responded with initiatives such as enhanced school-holiday experiences and the successful programming over July and August as part of the Summer lates programme.

The lower than budgeted footfall at the Roman Baths has resulted in a lower than budgeted admission income. It should also be noted that admission income is up 6% on 24/25 at the Roman Baths, despite the reduced visitor numbers. This is due to the increases in prices made possible by detailed planning work in 24/25 and the Service is on-track to return it's largest ever surplus to the Council of £11.8million. The Service has responded pro-actively with additional income activities and prudent cost control which has mitigated over £700k of the shortfall in projected income.

Figure 1 below shows footfall relative to budget, pre-pandemic and prior year. At Q3 the forecast for visitors in 2025/26 has reduced from a budget of 1,100,000 to 972,000.

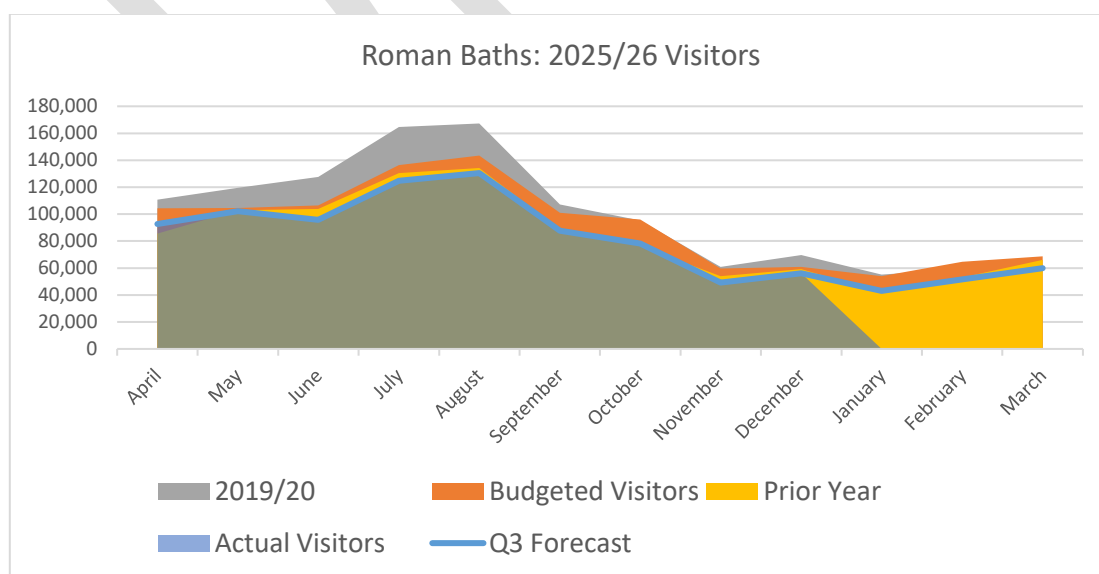


Figure 1: 25/26 Financial Year Roman Baths visitor numbers

The chart below provides a longer-term view of the pandemic's impact and recovery, shown alongside the visitors to Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) funded museums (chosen as comparators due to their high visitor numbers, national significance and large tourist markets and including: the British Museum, Science Museum, V&A, Natural History Museum and Tate).

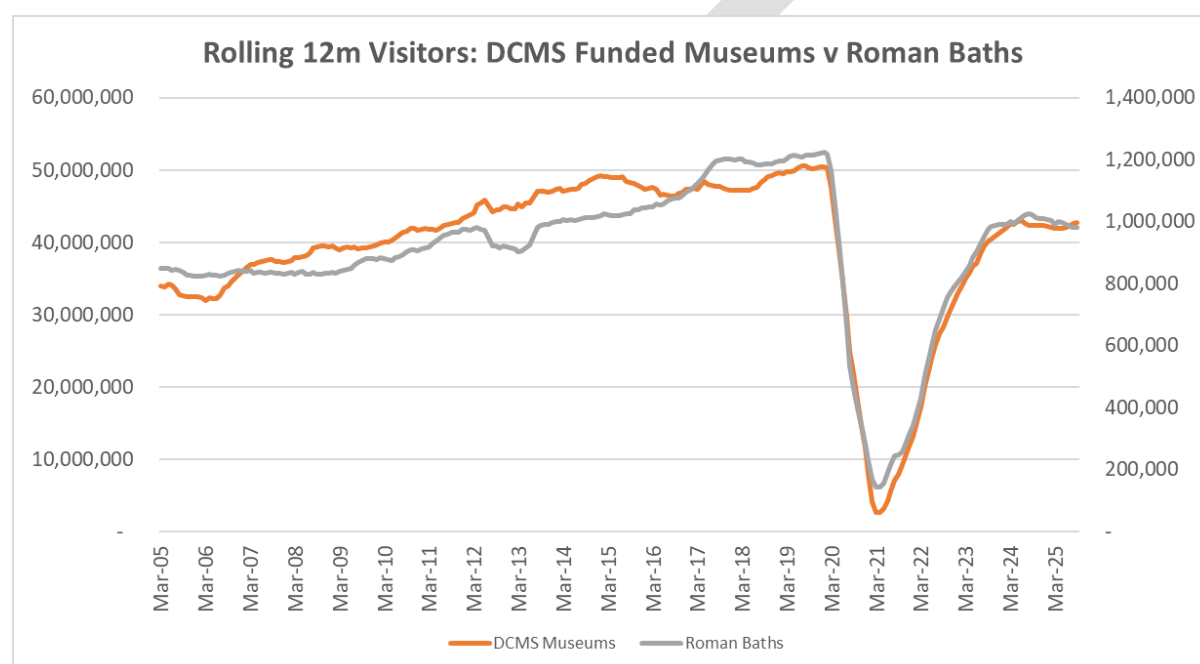


Figure 2: Rolling 12 month DCMS funded museum and Roman Baths visitor numbers

Figure 2 shows that over the 12 months to September 2025, the DCMS funded museums have seen a small (1.5% growth in visitors), whereas the Roman Baths has seen a reduction as set out above. It should be noted that DCMS funded museums are largely free to enter, attracting predominantly domestic audiences, which may help to stabilise their visitor numbers, particularly during a period of prolonged cost of living pressures when paid for attractions such as the Roman Baths can be seen as discretionary spending which can be constrained.¹

¹ More broadly, the chart sets some of the longer-term context for the Roman Baths, in the build up to COVID. The Brexit referendum (and weakening of GBP) drove a steady increase of visitors to both sets of attractions. The impact of terror attacks in 2017, saw a switch out of London, this chart shows that switch very clearly in May – Aug 2017. Then COVID, which came just after the Roman Baths' busiest ever year. The fuller impacts of the pandemic have been set out in previous versions of the Plan and are not repeated here.

The DCMS chart in figure 2, demonstrates that the slowdown in Roman Bath's COVID recovery from the middle of 2023 is mirrored across the sector, with sites seeing declining visitor numbers since summer 2024. Across the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) sites there is regional disparity with London, the South-East, East of England and Scotland reporting growth in the calendar year, whereas Wales, Northern Ireland, the North West and South West of England all recording a decline in visitors.

There are a range of factors depressing the inbound tourist market. These include:

- The strengthening of GBP against both USD and EUR, making overseas holidays less affordable for US and European travellers. International inbound travel only grew by 0.6%.
- Global political instability discouraging travel, there have been two active conflicts in Europe.
- Economic and political factors discouraging a recovery of the mainland Chinese market (e.g. pre-covid mandarin speakers at the Roman Baths were 120k per year, in 2025 it was less than half this figure).
- Real and perceived difficulties for long-haul visitors in including the UK as part of their visit to Europe including new visa rules
- There has been a consistent decline in the average length of stay for inbound visitors to the UK. As a result, international tourists can limit their itineraries to major destinations such as London and Edinburgh, leading to a continued concentration of economic benefits in these established "honeypot" locations
- US travellers now account for a much larger share of inbound spend than before the pandemic—rising from 16% in 2019 to 28% in 2024. Given the Roman Baths' global appeal, this highlights the challenges of missing key visitor segments that previously contributed to performance, created by the slower or incomplete return of other international markets compared with 2019.

In terms of domestic audiences, factors influencing visits have included:

- Domestic audiences, who could afford to, have opted for more overseas holidays driven by poor weather across 2023 and 2024. The strengthening of GBP against both USD and EUR, makes it more affordable for British people to travel to these locations. In 2025 domestic outbound travel grew by 7.2%.
- Cost of living has meant that many domestic visitors are choosing to take fewer days out and prioritising free visitor attractions, as noted above.

- The sites that have seen growth this year have programmed to add to their normal offer. This proved successful during the Summer Lates music programme at the Baths and is something which will be expanding in 2026.

Retail sales have mirrored the decline in visitors as the cost of living impacted on visitor's desire to spend. Retail sales have been down 3% during the 25/26 financial year to date compared to 24/25. Sales in the Pump Room has been solid across the financial year to date with spend per diner up over 8%.

Visitor Enjoyment scores at the Roman Baths have exceeded target and, in the most recent mystery visit, the Roman Baths scored 99%, one of the top scores for all participating attractions in 2025. While overall scores remain strong, they are slightly lower than in 2024/25.

This is partly due to our more commercial pricing approach: the average admission price has risen by 8%. Although enjoyment scores confirm that the quality of the experience remains high, the price increase has naturally influenced the value for money rating.

It is worth noting that scores in the final quarter are typically higher, as this period benefits from lower prices and quieter visitor numbers. We therefore expect overall scores to improve by yearend.

	Apr-Nov 2025	Apr-Nov 2024	TARGET
Visitor Enjoyment	8.68	8.80	8.60
Value for Money	7.84	8.00	8.00
Net Promoter Score	+57	+62	+60

Figure 3: Roman Baths Visitor Experience Scores 2025/26 v 2024/25

In 2025, 1,570 people were directly engaged through targeted community activities, up from 1,012 in 2024—a 55% increase. The programme prioritised building and sustaining meaningful relationships and initiatives. The Roman Baths Youth Forum grew with new members, while Minerva Mondays (a monthly wellbeing group) expanded. Key partnerships continued with Bath Carers Centre, local universities, and the Council's Resettlement Team. New collaborations included Blind Veterans UK, now a valued partner returning in 2026. Health and wellbeing initiatives reached a broader audience via social prescribing and ongoing support for internal Council services. Our inclusion in the Wellbeing Courses Working Group reflects strong ties with these teams.

The Service launched Archaeology Adventures, a paid family activity in the Investigation Zone, which has become a core part of our holiday offer. Our Free School Meal initiative broadened access and attracted more schools that might not have otherwise visited, strengthening our educational outreach. We renewed the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, maintaining national recognition for quality and safety. Additionally, we delivered specialist day schools, including *Latin for Beginners* and *The Latin Express*.

World Heritage Centre

The World Heritage Centre is expecting to welcome around 90,000 visitors in 25/26. The Centre recently won Gold for Visitor Information Service of the Year at the Bristol Bath and Somerset Tourism awards.

Victoria Art Gallery

The Victoria Art Gallery celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2025. The Service was able to mark this milestone with the re-opening of the Upper Gallery following an extensive investment in repairs to the historic roof. The Council's investment in these repairs demonstrated the organisational commitment to publicly available culture for all. Visitors to the Upper Gallery have been ahead of budget each month since it's reopening in May, demonstrating the popularity of this space, particularly with local audiences. Overall, the Gallery has welcomed 66,122 visitors in the financial year-to-date (end of December 2025), an increase of 57% on last year, as demonstrated in the chart in figure 4.

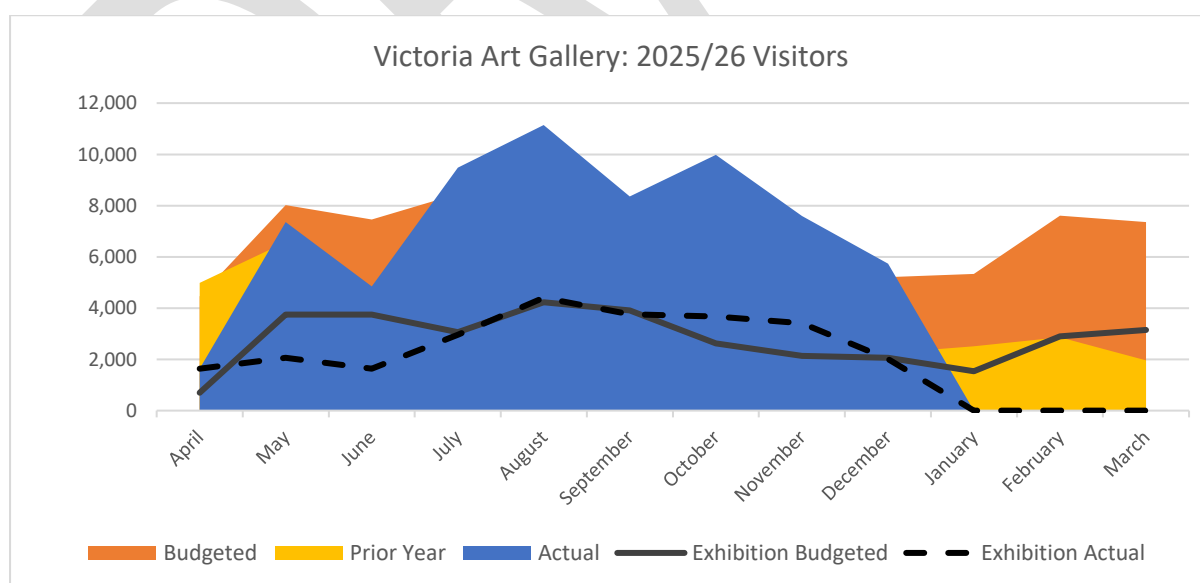


Figure 4: 2025/26 Victoria Art Gallery Visitor Numbers

The Service was also able to open 'the Modelling Room'. This space, dedicated to learning and engagement activities has the potential to be transformational for the audiences and relevancy of the institution. It was funded almost entirely by third party funds from the Friends of Victoria Art Gallery and an individual donor.

Fashion Museum

Whilst the Fashion Museum is now closed, we have continued to loan objects from the collection to major fashion exhibitions across the world. In 2025 over 550,000 people saw Fashion Collection objects across the UK and around the world. Items from the Council's internationally significant collection were loaned to several prestigious exhibitions across Europe and the UK. These included:

- **Petit Palais & Palais Galliera, Paris, France**

Two couture dresses by the House of Worth featured prominently in *Worth, Inventing Haute Couture*. These garments, created around 1903 for Empress Eugénie and Mary Curzon, exemplify the origins of haute couture and were displayed until September 2025.

- **National Galleries of Scotland: Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh**

A pair of elaborately embroidered gloves once owned by King James I and a 17th-century embroidered waistcoat appeared in *The World of King James VI & I* (April–September 2025).

- **The Garden Museum, London**

Cecil Beaton's Garden Party (May–September 2025) included a hat worn by Beaton and a silk dress featuring his hand-painted ivy-leaf design.

- **Polesden Lacey, National Trust, Surrey**

Dress to Impress (May–November 2025) showcased an 18th-century blue silk waistcoat with military-style gold embroidery from the Bath collection.

These loans demonstrate the breadth of the Fashion Museum Bath's holdings—from early 17th-century accessories to early 20th-century haute couture—and their continued cultural impact during the museum's transition to its new home in Bath.

Over 2025 the Fashion Museum Bath project has made excellent progress. The start of the financial year was marked by the announcement that the project was successful in its application for development phase funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The Lottery contribution of £768k was joined by a contribution from B&NES of £1,359,231

which allowed the project to progress through RIBA Stage 3. The project passed its NLHF development phase review in November 2025 and an internal review of the RIBA 3 design phase. Part of this work involved a consultation exercise across BANES, with over 4,500 residents consulted on the proposals for the new Museum and associated public realm works.

The project has maintained its strong focus on sustainability, operational efficiency, and robust engagement with communities across BANES. The project remains ambitious in its vision, with a clear path to opening in Winter 2030, subject to continued funding success and effective risk management.

Systems Infrastructure

In the 2025/26 financial year, Heritage Services prioritised strategic investment in core systems to enhance operational efficiency and customer engagement. This included the implementation of Phase 1 of the new ticketing system, Expian, implementing Futura to optimise point of sale and back of house retail processes, and the procurement of Good CRM to strengthen marketing automation and relationship management. These investments will support streamlined workflows, and enhanced visitor communications, aligning with our long-term digital transformation objectives. By modernising these platforms, we will deliver a more personalised experience for customers, improved reporting capabilities, and ensured scalability to meet future service demands across all our sites. These system changes will also realise productivity and resource efficiencies for the Service.

3.2. Future targets

The financial summary and key future targets are set out in appendix 1 and 2 respectively, alongside the prior year actuals and current year forecast. Figure 4 below shows the expected recovery of both income and profit.

	2024/25 (actual)	2025/26 (Q3 f'cast)	2026/27 (proposed)	2027/28 (proposed)	2028/29 (proposed)	2029/30 (proposed)	2030/31 (proposed)
External turnover (£000)	26,008	27,369	29,441	30,498	31,040	31,802	32,735
Net Profit (£000)	11,648	11,754	13,261	13,515	13,525	13,508	13,517

<i>Profit as a % of income</i>	44.7%	43.0%	45%	44.3%	43.6%	42.5%	41.3%
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Figure 5: Heritage Services income and profit

The Plan projects growth in visitor numbers and visitor-driven income from the current performance outlined above. We anticipate visitor numbers of 1,005,000 at the Roman Baths in 26/27 which will be a 3.4% increase on the projected visitor numbers in 25/26. It is noted that this growth is primarily related to the two Easter weekends in the 26/27 financial year (due to an early Easter in March 2027) and the Service feels it is prudent to model minimal year-on-year growth. In effect, the strategies to encourage visitation outlined in section 3.3.3 will stop the trend of footfall decline seen across the 24/25 and 25/26 financial years.

The actual visitor figures outlined in section 3.1. confirm that the period of rapid growth driven by the COVID recovery has concluded. As noted in the 25/26 iteration of the Business Plan, we have used the current trend to update long-term projections for visitor numbers and therefore income in future years. As noted in section 3.3.3. we will employ a number of strategies to drive additional visitation to the Roman Baths, but we will not have an indication as to their efficacy in slowing or reversing market trends until they are put into place.

The outermost year of the plan has been modelled as flat growth as we are not yet in a position to confirm the impact of the Fashion Museum on the overall cost-base and income projections for the Service. At 5 years out from opening of the new facility this is understandable and it is our expectation that we will be able to confirm this in the next iteration of the Business plan.

The financial targets for the Service absorb the recent increases in pay created as part of the Being our Best Programme and further anticipated pay awards to be agreed by the Council for each year of the plan, as well as other inflation pressures on the cost base. With the future anticipated rises to the living wage, pay is expected to be the biggest cost pressure facing the Service. Another notable cost increase is related to the requirement to store the Council's reserve collections in commercial storage the costs of which have been realised partly in 25/26 and will be fully realised in 26/27.

3.3. Action Against Strategic Priorities

3.3.1. To provide maximum access to our buildings, monuments and collections to as wide an audience as possible to facilitate learning, understanding and emotional connection

The Service will continue to offer free admission to schools where 30% of pupils receive free school meals. The Service will introduce a £1 ticket for those in receipt of Universal Credit and will continue to provide tickets through [Tickets for Good](#). These measures are designed to attract new audiences, who we have not traditionally welcomed to our site, from outside of the local authority area. This activity, the provision of access to culture to those for whom price represents a significant barrier to entry, aligns with the priorities of national funding bodies such as the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and independent trusts and foundations. It also offers a strong connection to the West of England Combined Authority's cultural plan. The financial impact of these activities will be very limited.

In 2025, the Service continued to advance research at the Roman Baths, with ongoing work on the human skeletal material and the AHRC-funded PhD led by Edward Knowles in partnership with the Universities of Exeter and Reading. This research is deepening our understanding of the site and its collections. Looking ahead, the Service will support the launch of the "Voices of Britain under and after Rome" project in October 2026, following a successful AHRC funding application for £1.4m. As a key partner, the Roman Baths will collaborate with Professor Alex Mullen's team to reassess the curse tablet collection using advanced imaging and interdisciplinary approaches, further enhancing the reinterpretation of the Roman Baths.

In 2026, the community engagement programme will continue to maintain and create sustainable relationships and activities. This includes the refugee programme, Roman Baths Youth Forum, partnerships with the Carers Centre and Headway, as well as other local community groups and charities. There is a desire to expand this to include Bath Mencap and other organisations as part of the site's Audience Development Plan. The Service will be applying to become a Museum of Sanctuary this year. Health and wellbeing activities will be developed further, reaching a wider audience through social prescription, and continuing the support of internal B&NES services such as Public Health and Children's Services.

Although the Fashion Museum is without a physical location during this period of capital development, work is underway to ensure the Collection is accessible to the public. Collection visits, an ambitious loans programme as well as workshops and events will ensure that Fashion Museum Bath is never far from people's minds. *Explore the Collection* is a digital innovation project which will launch in early 2026, part-funded by Arts Council England. The first stage will focus on the Dress of the Year Collection combining collection data with multimedia and rich narrative-based content revealing the extraordinary stories that each object can tell. This project will be delivered with B&NES Library Services and will be co-created with local young people in Bath and North East Somerset.

Our ambitious National Lottery Heritage Fund Activity Plan has been developed with a range of partners including Bath College, Youth Connect South West and London School of Architecture. The plan will ensure we can engage with new and underrepresented audiences across B&NES using our collection as the starting point. In order to deliver this, in 2026 we will be recruiting two new FMB team members – a Learning & Engagement Coordinator for Young People and a Learning and Engagement Social Prescribing Officer (Public Health). We will also be growing our pool of volunteers and freelance artists/designers/creative practitioners to help deliver a dynamic, high-quality programme. Building on the success of our current outreach resource Fashion Unpacked – the 'Trunk' we are working on the next phase of our outreach project 'Trunk Show'; with the second in a series of trunks developed and ready for a programme of community outreach starting in autumn 2026.

A programme of temporary exhibitions will continue to be delivered at the Victoria Art Gallery.

- **Poster Power:** 23 January – 10 May 2026
- **Norman Ackroyd: Through the Years:** 22 May – 6 September 2026
- **Bath Society of Artists 121st Annual Open Exhibition:** 19 September – 7 November 2026
- **The World of the Snowman:** 20th November 2026 – 28th February 2027

We will also review the forward plan for the Gallery in 26/27 allowing us to confirm the strategic position of the Gallery and the Council's civic art collection within the cultural landscape of BANES.

Bath Record Office will continue with its audience development plan so that the archives and local studies collections can reach wider and more diverse audiences. One of the main

areas of activity is the 60th anniversary of the archives service in 2027 to include a week-long exhibition, a series of talks, and a touring display around local libraries. Other activities will include temporary displays in the Guildhall, work placement opportunities for students, loans to other museums and galleries and a more pro-active collecting strategy to ensure the collections' ongoing relevance. The service will also benefit from the NLHF funded Sounds of the South West project which will enable the team to deliver engagement and outreach events based on its digitised audio collections across 2026-2028.

3.3.2. To be a supporter focussed organisation

Having procured and implemented a new Visitor Management System in 2025 further phases of this work will continue with a view to integrating it with the recently procured Customer Relationship Management System. This will give the Service the ability to systematically manage and analyse visitor data, providing valuable insights into their preferences, behaviours, and engagement patterns. Our marketing approach will evolve to tailor our offerings and communications to meet the specific needs and interests of our various audience segments.

We will continue to work closely with the Roman Baths Foundation (following the influx of new trustees), the Fashion Museum Foundation (as the project to develop the new museum gathers pace) and the Friends of Victoria Art Gallery (as the forward plan for the Gallery is developed) to increase the amount and range of support for our sites and collections.

At the end of 2025 over 60,000 BANES residents had received Discovery Cards following the scheme's relaunch in 2022. In the 26/27 financial year the service will explore different approaches to the Discovery Card scheme to ensure it is delivering the most value and impact to those who need it most whilst remaining a prudent financial investment by the Council.

3.3.3. To Maximise Income

Heritage Services will seek to maximise income generating opportunities across its areas of operation.

Roman Baths

- **Additional visitors.** The Service is budgeting for 1.005million visitors in 2026/27, an increase of around 33,000 from the forecast footfall in 2025/26.

- **Ticket Price.** Price increases planned for 2026 will raise the price for both individuals and groups at all points during the year.
- **Price structure changes.** Work will be undertaken on the potential to offer more value-led products that incentivise those who have not previously chosen to visit and/or repeat their visit to the site.
- **Additional product offering.** Following the appointment of a cultural programmes manager in early 2026, a wider range of activations will be delivered to increase the value offer available to visitors and encourage new and repeat visits.
- **Additional Marketing Resource:** We have budgeted to increase the marketing resource available to the Service both in terms of staffing and media buying to drive additional visitation.
- **Travel Trade:** We have changed the responsibilities of an existing role, made possible by changes to the Council's telephony system, to focus more on building relationships with, and marketing to, the travel trade in order to drive more inbound tourists to the Roman Baths.

Victoria Art Gallery

- Deliver a very appealing, family-friendly exhibition, 'The world of the snowman', in winter 2026.
- Use the capabilities of the new Visitor Management System to explore cross site promotion between the Roman Baths and the Gallery to try and drive more visitors from the Baths to the Gallery.

Cross Service

- We will continue to deliver our commercial event programme working internally and with external local festival organisations to deliver revenue through ticketed events. The programme will reflect key local and national events and anniversaries and will include dinners, balls, silent discos, murder mystery evenings and Christmas party nights
- Continue to maximise revenue through catering concession at the Pump Room and Roman Baths and delivering a high-quality experience for all external clients who hire the Council's heritage venues and parks for private events.

3.3.4. To operate efficiently and effectively as an organisation

Following consideration of the relationship between Heritage Services and the Council over 2025, in 2026 we will consider how to improve the efficacy of the Heritage Advisory Board. This may include moving the Board to a shape and function more in-line with a traditional charity board – starting with an independent chair. The outcome envisaged is more constructive challenge to the Service on the specifics of our operations whilst also providing the Council with independent and expert quality assurance of the Service's activities.

The Service will also continue to benchmark its performance within ALVA and the Association of Cultural Enterprises (ACE) to provide assurance to the Council that the Service is delivering value for money. We will also continue with our other Visitor Experience assurance activities including VAQAS, mystery shopper and post visit surveys.

In 2026 the Service will continue to review the way in which we approach our work and realise efficiencies available to us in order to reduce our cost base where possible. This will include a review of our Operations and Facilities teams in-line with 'Being our Best' principals. Alongside this, the Service will engage in the Council's Corporate Landlord project, ensuring that the Council realises its ambition for a central overview of its estate, exploring opportunities for efficiency in the delivery of maintenance and compliance activity, whilst safeguarding the Service's ability to be agile and responsive in the management of its built assets and infrastructure.

The Collections Care and Documentation programme at the Roman Baths in 2026 focuses on improving storage, documentation and access across the collections. Key work includes the Culverhay store move, expanding public access and research use of Feeder Road, and supporting renewed interest in Keynsham archaeology through displays and archive work. As always, the Service will take an approach of continuous improvement to its collection manager with ongoing work in this area. Public-facing activity continues through display refreshes, new exhibition plans to 2027, the Spa Project, and collaborative initiatives such as the Chew Valley Hoard, alongside hosting student placements.

Conservation work at the Roman Baths in 2026 aims to establish clear baselines for the condition of key monument spaces, including observation and cleaning work in the West and East Baths, and setting priorities for the Temple Precinct. Strategic work includes feasibility planning for a 3D model of the Great Bath, updating the Conservation Action Plan, and

formalising maintenance, access and recording procedures. Conservation practice will be strengthened through staff and contractor training, improved data capture, and a cross-organisational Environmental Monitoring and Archaeological Conservation group. Environmental monitoring, flood preparedness, and conservation planning for the Minerva anniversary also feature, alongside object-based projects such as work on Keynsham material and developing a fundraising and treatment plan for the Tompion clock.

Bath Record Office will continue to develop the paper conservator role by building relationships with local heritage organisations and groups which require conservation support and thus expand this income stream. The conservator will also support other teams within Heritage Services and take on volunteers and student placements. Volunteers will continue to support a variety of collections care activities such as repackaging, cleaning, and digitisation. Alongside this work continues to transfer priority digital records into the Preservica digital preservation system to ensure long-term access.

The Service will continue to implement its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, via the approved action plan. In 2025, all permanent employees received EDI training and the EDI working group terms of reference were reviewed. 2026 will see the implementation of the outcomes agreed as part of a second round of funding for EDI activity made available from Arts Council England via Museum Development South West. Looking ahead to 2026/27, the EDI working group will focus on increasing visibility and communication across the organisation, regularly reviewing and updating training needs, and ensuring measurable progress through clear action planning and reporting. The group will also prioritise creating safe spaces for feedback, broadening representation, and embedding EDI values into all aspects of service delivery and narrative development, ensuring our sites and collections present a fully inclusive view of the past, based on the most up-to-date research.

As in previous plans, an integral part of the strategy going forward will be ongoing investment in the Service workforce. We will continue to build an even stronger performance culture with staff engagement, wellbeing and development at its heart. This will include engaging with the new Council management training resource to develop management capability and consistency across the organisation. The Service will continue to evaluate its staffing complement and structures to ensure that it is able to deliver on the Strategic Priorities outlined in this document.

26/27 will see a review and re-casting of the Service's proposition for the Roman Baths. This will be an important pre-cursor to the wider Strategy re-casting envisaged for 2027. This work will consider the variety of activity that occurs across the Roman Baths and Pump Rooms and endeavour to bring this together under a more unified, cross-service set of organising thoughts that will sharpen the focus and efficacy of the Service's activities at our key property.

3.3.5 To bring benefit to B&NES, the South West and the UK

Heritage Services will use its platform and influence to:

- Represent B&NES on the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) [Cultural Compact](#) to deliver on the WECA cultural strategy;
- Represent B&NES as an operational board member of Visit West and work with Visit West to deliver the [destination management plan](#) for the region;
- Continue to be a voice in the sector through membership of the Executive Board of the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association
- Represent The Roman Baths and Pump Room as a board member for the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions;
- Work with key services across the Council to deliver B&NES's corporate strategy. By working in partnership Heritage Services can play a pivotal role in the city's economic, cultural and social future, creating increased access to some of the world's great cultural assets. It will also deliver regeneration, economic, skills, placemaking, health and wellbeing benefits across the wider region. These benefits will most effectively be realised by the execution of the Community Engagement Strategies for the Roman Baths, Fashion Museum Bath project and work of the Victoria Art Gallery and Bath Record Office Teams.
- Continue to provide opportunities for volunteering throughout the Service. Through these opportunities support and grow our volunteer cohort that support the Service deliver its objectives and enhance community wellbeing. Volunteering offers numerous benefits, including improved physical and mental health, reduced stress, and a sense of purpose. By fostering social connections and skill development,

Heritage Service contributes to the wider Council's prevention objectives, promoting healthier, more resilient communities.

3.3.6 To act as an environmentally sustainable and responsible organisation in everything we do

In the last 12 months, the service has been working on refining and delivering a 3-year environmental action plan which covers 4 key goals. This plan is included as an appendix to this document. To build on works started in 2025, in 2026 the priority workstreams are as follows:

1. Decarbonising operations

- a. **Improve Building Efficiency** – optimise heating systems (radiators, heat pumps), feasibility of expanding existing heat pump system to cover more square-meters in the Roman Baths
- b. **Optimise Controls** – upgrade and fine-tune BMS for heating, air conditioning (AC), and other equipment to maximise energy performance across the service
- c. **Upgrade Equipment & Lighting** – continue rolling out efficient lighting upgrades to LEDs where possible, ensure AC unit and asset replacements are energy efficient
- d. **Reduce Operational Energy Use** – pilot project focussing on lowering out-of-hours energy consumption and collaborate with catering to cut energy demand.
- e. **Advance Sustainability** – subject to feasibility and planning, install on-site renewable electricity (solar PV) on the roof of the Clore Learning Centre.

2. Improve sustainability data accuracy

- a. **Expand carbon footprint** scope with emissions from digital and capital projects
- b. **Improve accuracy of visitor travel data** through continued partnerships within the sector, and better data from updated visitor management systems

3. Empower and engage visitors, employees and suppliers

- a. **Supplier Engagement & Data Collection** – continue to gather annual data from suppliers, with at least 60% of spend to have a carbon footprint in place
- b. **Collaborative Partnerships** – work with other museums and the Council to share resources, host workshops, and drive consistent practise and methodology across the sector.

- c. **Retail Products** – apply RAG ratings and implement selection criteria for all retail product purchases. Work with Bath Uni work placement to map and plan for potential trade-offs between products & sustainability criteria
- d. **Training & Awareness** – continue to deliver carbon literacy training to all permanent staff. Work with the curatorial team to establish a programme of activity that positively influences visitor behaviour.
- e. **Systems & Integration** – continue to work on implementing an integrated Park and Ride ticket for visitors, allowing them to commit to a more sustainable travel option at their point of purchase.

4. **Lead by example in the sector**

- a. **Achieve Recognition for Sustainability** – in 2025 the Victoria Art Gallery became a Gallery Climate Coalition member. In 2026 we will consider additional external accreditations e.g. Green Tourism, or Carbon Literate Organisations
- b. **Collaborate & Lead** – lead peer learning groups with other museums/attractions
- c. **Advocate & Educate** – Speak at external events and communicate environmental impact through collections, tours and storytelling.
- d. **Strengthen Governance & Planning** – Set up reporting structures, publish adaptation plans, and align risks across all heritage sites.
- e. **Ensure Climate Resilience** – review climate risk register quarterly, and build climate adaptation plan to ensure all sites are well adapted to changes in our climate

3.4. Fashion Museum Bath

3.4.1. Project overview

The Service is progressing with the plan to establish a new Fashion Museum in Bath City Centre, in the Grade II listed Old Post Office. The project will:

- Create the only museum in the UK dedicated to fashion heritage
- Reinvigorate the Fashion Museum Collection as a relevant and vital resource for Bath and North East Somerset residents as well as domestic and international audiences.
- Create dynamic social and civic spaces accessible to all.

- Deliver a benchmark standard of environmental and economic sustainability in its delivery and impact.
- Create a transformational museum which is an agent of societal change – locally, regionally and nationally.

The project aligns with the Council's corporate vision to 'improve people's lives and its strategic priority to create a vibrant cultural life in BANES. It is a key component in the Council's future Economic Strategy and its Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Fashion Museum will play a pivotal role in the economic, cultural, and social future of the city, preserving and creating increased access to one of the world's great museum collections as well as delivering regeneration, economic, skills, placemaking, and wellbeing benefits across Bath and North East Somerset and the wider region.

Fashion Museum Bath is an anchor element of the Milsom Quarter Masterplan. It will help 'reimagine the high street' in the city centre encouraging commercial tenants and residents to move there and making the area a great place to live, work and socialise.

The project is also a key component of the West of England Combined Authority's Growth Plan.

The Museum

The Council has acquired the Old Post Office building within the Milsom Quarter of the city. This will be the new home of the Fashion Museum with flexible exhibition spaces to display more of the collection than ever before. Dedicated spaces for learning and engagement, integrated café and retail areas will provide a shared and welcoming social space in the city centre. The Museum will also be an exemplar of sustainable retro-fit. The project will bring back to life a renovated heritage asset, creating a permanent home for this internationally significant collection.

In 2025 further design work was undertaken and RIBA III detailed design completed. We anticipate the museum to open in 2030 with construction beginning on site in 2027. An economic impact appraisal has been conducted with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) which falls into the 'high' value for money category as set out in the MHCLG Appraisal Guide 2023².

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dluhc-appraisal-guide/dluhc-appraisal-guide>

Social Value

The aim is for the Museum is for inclusive cultural engagement – with programming and activities targeted at communities across BANES. Fashion Museum Bath has developed an Activity Plan which aligns with core Council policy. This sets the audience engagement priorities and will provide cultural, educational, health and wellbeing, skills and career development opportunities for residents, particularly those experiencing socio-economic or health inequalities, with supporting digital activity to engage audiences and build community.

The target audiences for the Fashion Museum Bath Community Engagement Programme are:

- People living with health issues in BANES
- Families with young children, in particular those facing socio-economic inequalities and poverty
- Vulnerable young people in care, those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- BANES secondary school students and teachers

The project will impact the local community by:

- Being a welcoming and inclusive space for community participation and co-creation with a strong programme of events and activities that will generate a sense of belonging and civic pride.
- Welcome thousands of schoolchildren per year by providing a new cultural destination for school visits in Bath.
- Partner with Bath Spa University, Bath College and other educational institutions to develop skills and training programmes for improving pathways into the fashion industry and wider creative industries.
- Offering new apprenticeship opportunities which support upskilling and reskilling.
- Providing a range of volunteer opportunities that will suit a broad audience.
- Introducing new audiences to cultural experiences through the universally fascinating topic of fashion.
- Offering creative activities that support health and wellbeing.
- Provide free entry to B&NES residents and schools so there is universal access to these benefits.

3.4.2. Interim storage

Whilst a new permanent home is created the collection is housed at Dents glovemakers, one of the UK's leading heritage fashion brands. The costs associated with this storage are built into the Plan.

3.4.3. Project costing and overview

A provisional capital budget was added to the capital programme for the financial years 2025/26 to 2029/30 for Fashion Museum Renovation. The funding plan for the project is as follows:

- The Old Post Office site was acquired in 2021/22. This was funded via a repayable capital grant from the West of England Combined Authority Revolving Infrastructure Fund which is planned to be repaid from capital receipts from disposal of Corporate property assets.
- The total provisional capital budget is envisaged to be drawn from service supported borrowing funded from net admissions income, Corporate Supported Borrowing representing Council support and a fund-raising target including future grant applications.
- The Council will make a proportion of this funding available so that RIBA IV design work can continue in 26/27.
- A fundraising campaign will contribute to the remaining project costs. This will include grant applications and third-party contributions.
- A planning application was submitted in January 2026 with determination expected in May 2026.
- RIBA IV (technical design) will commence in August 2026.

4. Risk

The Services' strong recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic has plateaued, in line with the rest of the sector, over the last 12 months. Through entrepreneurial approaches to pricing, development of additional revenue streams and prudent cost management, the Service has continued to increase profitability and is forecasting to deliver growth in surplus from a broadly flat visitor base.

Non-English use of the audioguide remains 38% below 2019 level, with Mandarin and Japanese 54% and 58% down respectively. This highlights the extent to which the recovery of the Asian market is less established and therefore carries more risk. The strengthening of Sterling against key currencies for inbound tourism presents a risk to the delivery of inbound tourism. The risk associated with the GBP:EUR exchange rate is twofold, as well as dampening demand for inbound tourism it makes overseas holidays more affordable for a domestic market. This, coupled with the inflationary economic pressures, presents a risk to the supply of domestic tourists in 2025; specifically, that those who can afford to may chose to holiday abroad and those remaining in the UK may not be able to afford leisure spending at the same level.

The Plan assumes that there will be no new adverse impact caused by security, economic or environmental events, but it should be noted that terrorism continues to pose a risk. Potential further international uncertainty driven by geopolitical incidents also casts a shadow over the future years.

Any impact on the USA market will have an adverse impact on the Roman Baths as this is our largest overseas market. This feels particularly important in the 26/27 financial year as it is the 250th anniversary of the declaration of independence which may encourage more Americans to holiday domestically. Any economic decline, or reduction in disposable income for middle-class Americans will obviously further impact propensity to travel. Additionally the FIFA Men's World Cup in the US in the summer of 2027 will increase the price of transatlantic flights during this period.

It should be noted that the surplus for 26/27 of £13.269m is a stretching target. It requires the current decline in visitor numbers to be arrested and reversed. To achieve this, the Service will need to see a positive response to the strategies outlined in 3.3.3. as well as

growth in the inbound market from international tourists which is dependent on factors outside of the Service's control.

Heritage Services' net income is a key factor in the Council's Budget. The risks outlined on visitor numbers and consequently on income have been factored into the Council's 2026/27 budget setting process, with regards to both its budgeted contingencies and adequacy of its reserves. Actual visitor numbers in 25/26 have been used to rebase the future projections for the Service at a level which reflects the updated emerging picture, and in turn will be reflected in the Council's budget planning for future years.

There are inherent risks to Fashion Museum Bath. At this stage the risks associated with this project are commensurate with a project of this scale and ambition and no more than this. Strict project governance and a quantified risk register will manage risk.

Progress has been made on the pathway to net zero with the Service's Sustainability Manager having a demonstrable impact. However, the ability to achieve net 0 by 2030 is in question as is the level of financial commitment required to off-set the Service's remaining emissions footprint. Work will continue to understand this over 26/27.

Appendix 1: Financial Summary

Business Plan Summary

	Prior Year Actuals		2025/26	2026/27	Plan Years			
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	Forecast £'000	Budget £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
Admissions	(19,889)	(21,127)		(24,266)	(24,993)	(25,756)	(26,536)	(27,433)
Retail Sales	(2,717)	(2,746)		(2,834)	(3,100)	(3,111)	(3,123)	(3,134)
Room Hire	(656)	(628)		(703)	(731)	(752)	(695)	(703)
Catering	(427)	(397)		(475)	(490)	(505)	(520)	(536)
Other Income	(863)	(1,013)		(1,135)	(1,171)	(904)	(917)	(918)
Grants/Contributions	(97)	(97)		(28)	(12)	(12)	(12)	(12)
Total Income	(24,649)	(26,008)	(27,374)	(29,441)	(30,498)	(31,040)	(31,802)	(32,735)
Employee Costs	6,243	6,885		7,898	8,259	8,586	8,927	9,280
Premises Costs	1,696	1,597		1,837	1,868	1,969	2,078	2,193
Transport Costs	41	36		50	51	53	54	56
Supplies & Services	3,269	3,497		3,729	3,899	4,044	4,046	4,045
Maintenance	355	485		667	674	677	693	702
Investment	416	322		442	500	470	490	510
Total Expenditure	12,020	12,822	14,025	14,625	15,253	15,800	16,289	16,788
Internal Income	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge codes	1,511	1,538	1,589	1,555	1,723	1,708	1,999	2,424
Internal Recharges	1,511	1,538	1,589	1,555	1,723	1,708	1,999	2,424
Contribution to Reserves	6	0	6	0	6	6	6	6
(Surplus) / Deficit	(11,112)	(11,648)	(11,754)	(13,261)	(13,515)	(13,525)	(13,508)	(13,517)
Operating Margin	45.1%	44.8%	42.9%	45.0%	44.3%	43.6%	42.5%	41.3%
Wage %	25.3%	26.5%	28.5%	26.8%	27.1%	27.7%	28.1%	28.3%

Appendix 2: KPI Targets

	2024/25 (actuals)	2025/26 (forecast)	2026/27 (proposed)	2027/28 (proposed)	2028/29 (proposed)	2029/30 (proposed)	2030/31 (proposed)
Roman Baths visitors (000s)	993	972	1,005	1,005	1,020	1,035	1,051
Victoria Art Gallery visitors (000s)	49	85	91	92	93	95	97
World Heritage Centre visitors (000s)	100	90	100	100	107	110	112
Roman Baths income per visitor (£)*	24.13	26.38	27.20	28.16	28.51	28.85	29.30
Education visitors at Roman Baths	13,895	15,796	16,200	16,500	16,500	16,500	16,500
Discovery Cards Issued (000s)	12,000	5000	5,500	6000	26,000**	17,000**	12,000
Social media followers	170,356	265,317	278,582	292,511	307,136	324,259	340,500
Discovery Card holder visits (000s)	19,000	19,000	19,250	19,500	19,750	20,000	20,000
Net profit per Council Tax household (£)³	127	134	151	154	154	154	154

³ Based on 87,647 Council Tax Households as of Jan 2026

Appendix 3: Sustainability Action Plan

See Separate PDF

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