

# Bolton Food & Drink Festival

## Markets, Economy and Community

The multiple award-winning Bolton Food Festival is often described as the largest food and drink festival in the UK. Without doubt it is a national and destination event. It is visionary and a huge influence on the local economy expanding its trading boundaries year on year. It allows young traders to experience a major event and involves local schools. We go behind the scenes and look at the planning, delivery and impact.

**Presenter: Peter Entwistle – Senior Manager, Commercial Assets,  
Bolton Council.**

# Bolton Market Background



- Bolton Market Team Responsibilities; other speciality markets in the borough and lead with the Corporate Events team in organising the Bolton Food & Drink Festival;
- Open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (9am-5pm);
- Employs 16 FTE staff;
- High level trader occupancy - currently 92%; and
- Undergoing a £5.9m development from the Towns Fund to upgrade/modernise Bolton Market to create a unique community/shopping destination.

## What is the - Bolton Food & Drink Festival

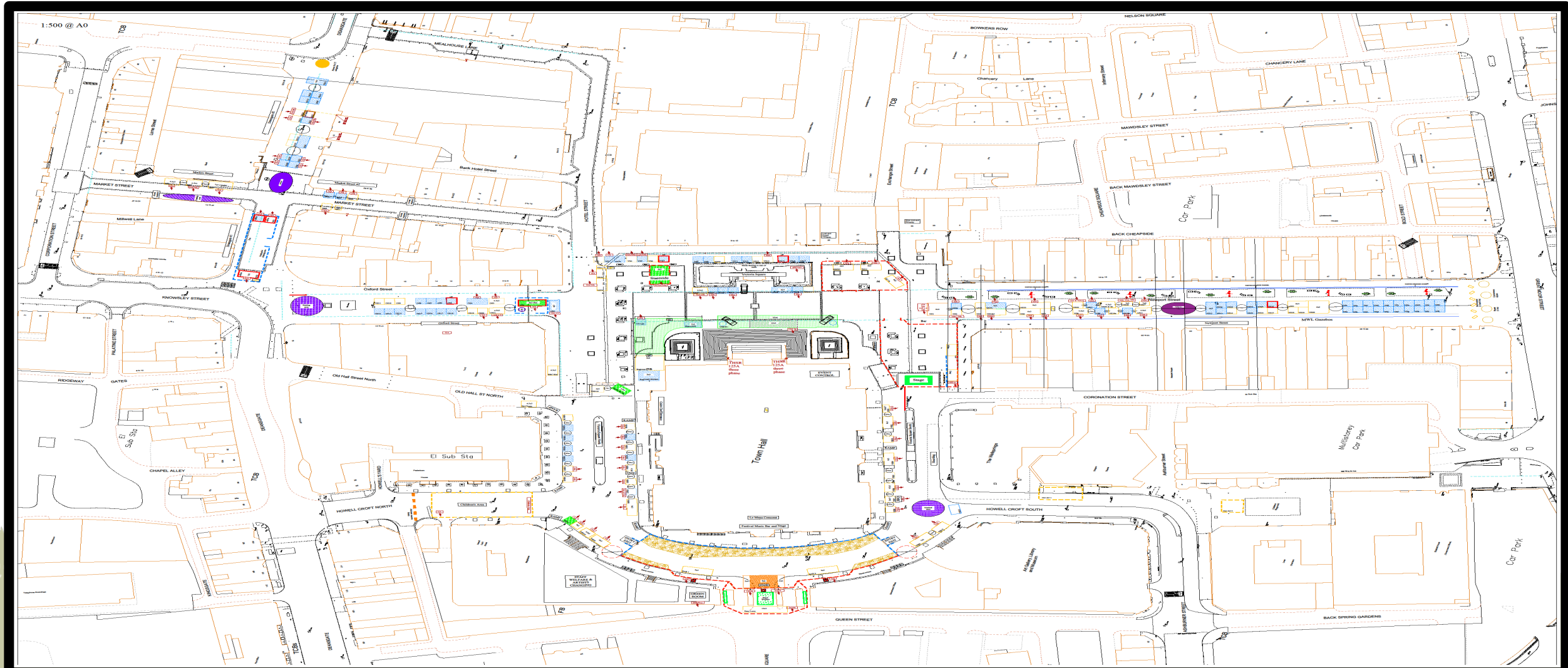
- Started in 2005 with around 11 stalls;
- Four-day event over the Aug Bank Holiday Weekend;
- Over 500k visitors in 2023;
- Supported by 17 sponsors;
- 180 stalls – food, beverage, artisan & crafters;
- 20 local artist sellers – Bolton Art Circle;
- Two tendered bar operators;
- Four independent bar operators;
- 85 core operational staff – markets, waste, security, events & first aid;
- 12 celebrity chef demos – Gok Wan, Nisha Katona and James Martin;
- 34 regional chef demos over the weekend;
- Children’s activities – Beach party, Around the World at the Octagon, Little Chefs Academy at Crompton Place, Cook and Dine teenage cookery sessions;
- Two youth gaming & chillout zones – air hocky, table football & retro computer games;
- Two live music stages – around 60 artists;
- Live street entertainment; and
- Ticketed special events – The Afterparty with Gok Wan, Bottomless Brunch, Faulty Towers and Live and Let Dine.



# Planning

- Begins from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept – trader/visitor survey, competitions, trader application tweaks;
- Corporate meetings commence Dec – cross section of council departments;
- Site plan confirmed Jan – across the town centre;
- Trader applications & bar tenders commence in Feb;
- Cross partnership working/contracts commences March – GMP, security, first aid, gazebo hire, public facilities, staging & electrical contractors;
- Allocation of pitches commences April;
- Sponsors & Partners secured by May;
- Traders confirmed at the end of June;
- From July to event start – final tweaks, site alterations take place, staff training (counter terrorism); and
- Week prior to the event – road closures start, and site build commences.

# Festival Town Centre Site Plan



## Five tips we use to deliver a successful food & drink event

1. Communicate key information to public before your event, local media, marketing, social media & website etc.
2. Have a clear understanding of what you want your event to achieve.
3. Balance of trade. Be fresh. Be original.
4. Use tech to involve public before, during and after an event.
5. Wow the public with a varied programme of events to suit every Jondra.



## What Impact does hosting the Food & Drink Festival bring

- Our event provides a chance to show off local and visiting businesses to the public;
- We've found our event can strengthen bonds between local communities, like helping to cope with and overcome personal struggles;
- The event has defiantly helped in establishing the town's identity – Seeing as every town is unique, local events like ours can help to keep old traditions alive, as well as to create new ones;
- Our event promotes and grows fledgling businesses from our popular youth and artisan markets; and
- A positive feel-good factor.



# Trader Feedback

"As a company we attend 3 festivals per week throughout summer and xmas period not only was your festival the best in terms of organisation but also the support from the whole team, special thanks to Christina and Steven. A big thank you to all at Bolton council." **Flavour Art Coffee**

"Keep doing what you're doing Bolton you are amazing, sales were well up on last year and much needed, extremely well organised and its free for visitors, and instant crowd pleaser."  
**The Tiny Takeaway**

"Excellent all-round, staff are great credit to the council." **Howey Nichols**

"The best market managers I have ever met - business was good like always." **Polish BBQ**

"Thank you everyone, one of our favourite events, hard work but worth it"  
**Bedazzled Cupcakes**

"Attending Bolton Food festival is rewarding in many ways for us Bolton is the standard to which all food festivals should aim for. Excellence applied to all detail with passion and integrity."  
**Churtopia**



# Questions?

